# CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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# Iran strikes India-bound ship in Hormuz

MEA condemned the attack, stating 'India deplores'; the Thai-flagged cargo vessel, Mayuree Naree, was heading to Gujarat's Kandla port.

**TEHRAN**

A Thai-flagged cargo ship bound for India was struck by a projectile in the strategic Gulf shipping lane on Wednesday, triggering a massive fire onboard and a rescue operation for its crew as the war between Iran and US rages on.

This attack occurred amid intense regional conflict in the Middle East and shortly after the Indian government announced it was securing alternative energy supplies due to disruptions and 2 LNG cargoes en route to India..

**Attacked in Strait of Hormuz**

Thai-registered bulk carrier travelling through the Strait of Hormuz was struck by a projectile, setting the vessel on fire while it was en-route to Gujarat's Kandla port. It may be noted that 70% of India's oil/cargo imports bypass Strait of Hormuz.

The ship, identified as Mayuree Naree, had departed Khalifa Port in the United Arab Emirates and was transiting the narrow shipping corridor when it was hit by what authorities described as an unknown projectile.

According to the Royal Thai Navy, heavy smoke was seen billowing from the vessel's hull and superstructure following the strike. Images released by the navy showed life rafts deployed in the water as the crew evacuated the burning ship.

The vessel is a 178-metre bulk carrier with a displacement of about 30,000 tonnes and is owned by Thai transport company 'Precious Shipping'.

Officials said 20 crew members have been rescued, while search efforts are continuing for three missing sailors. The rescued crew members were pulled from the water after abandoning the vessel. "The specific details and cause of the attack are currently under investigation," the Thai navy said in a statement.

Confirming the attack, the Thailand Transport Ministry on Wednesday stated a Thai cargo ship was struck in the Strait of Hormuz and three out of the 23 crew members aboard had gone missing.

## 'Deplore the fact': India condemns attack

The Ministry of External Affairs on Wednesday evening condemned the attack on Thai ship, Mayuree Naree, which was bound for Gujarat's Kandla, in the Strait of Hormuz, saying that "India deplores" the targeting of commercial ships in the ongoing conflict in West Asia. The Thai-flagged bulk carrier was reportedly struck by "two projectiles of unknown origin" while sailing through the Strait of Hormuz, triggering a fire, and damaging the engine room, the ship's Thai-listed operator, Precious Shipping, said in a statement.

## Iran claims responsibility for strike

Iran claimed responsibility for the strike on a Thai ship in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they fired at the Thai-flagged 'Mayuree Naree' bulk vessel in the strait, as per Iranian news agency 'Tasnim'.

## 4th ship to be attacked

- Four commercial ships were struck by "unknown projectiles" in the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday.
- Iran continues its strikes across the region, including in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait.

**Tehran will "not allow even a single litre of oil" to pass through the Strait of Hormuz to reach the US, Israel and their partners. Any vessel or tanker bound to them will be a legitimate target.**

—Ebrahim Zolfaqari, Spokesman for Tehran's Khatam al-Anbiya Military Command HQ

## Crude oil supplies secure, 2 LNG cargoes enroute to India: Centre

**New Delhi:** India's crude oil supply remains secure even as regional tensions threaten Gulf shipping lanes, with about 70% of imports coming through alternative routes and two cargoes en route to strengthen the situation, said Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas. "India's crude supply remains secure. Daily consumption is at 55 lakh barrels. We have secured more than what would normally have arrived through the Hormuz during this period," she added.

## 2 Indians killed, 1 missing after attack on merchant vessels: MEA

The MEA stated two Indians have died, and one remains missing after merchant vessels were attacked amid the ongoing West Asia war. The casualties occurred when Indian nationals were aboard merchant vessels that were attacked in conflict-hit waters. Several Indians have sustained injuries in the Gulf region amid the conflict, including one person hurt in Israel and another injured in Dubai.

## India's LPG crisis fuels 20x jump in induction stove sales

With the West Asia conflict hitting our fuel lines, the LPG Crunch has taken a heavy toll on Indian homes. As commercial stocks vanish and domestic refills face a 25-day lock-in, thousands are ditching the cylinder for the plug. Consequently, sales of induction cooktops have spiked up to 20 times to 60%+ premiums in the black market, leading to shortages on e-commerce platforms like Amazon and Flipkart. Restaurants are rationing fuel, reducing menus, or closing temporarily. Similar to pandemic-era hoarding, consumers are opting for 'panic buying' electric cooking alternatives, leading to stockouts. The LPG shortage has caused panic, with some reports suggesting high demand for alternatives.

As LPG runs dry
Kitchens switch to induction
E-commerce surge
Induction sales up by 20x
Electric stove orders up by 3x
Induction is now 30% cheaper than blackmarket LPG , which costs (₹913 official price - ₹1,500 street price for domestic cyliners) and (₹1,883 official - ₹3,000 backmarket for commercial cylinders).

## US-Israel strikes shake hearts of Tehran

**DUBAI**

As the conflict between Iran, the US, and Israel enters its 12th day, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has issued a dire warning, declaring economic centres and banking facilities linked to American and Israeli interests in the region as legitimate military targets.

The threat, issued by the IRGC-owned Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters, follows a deadly incident in Tehran where an Iranian bank branch was struck. Iranian state media described the attack as "illegitimate and unusual," reporting that several employees were killed. In retaliation, the IRGC has warned civilians to remain at least one kilometre away from banks associated with the two nations.

The scope of the conflict is rapidly shifting toward an "infrastructure war."

The IRGC-affiliated Tasnim news agency has published a list of corporate offices and cloud-based service infrastructures - including those operated by major technology firms like Google, Microsoft, Palantir, IBM, Nvidia, and Oracle, labelling them as new targets. These facilities are reportedly located across Israel and several Gulf countries, signalling an expansion of the battlefield.

The warning comes on the heels of an Israeli strike on a facility in Beirut suburbs linked to the Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Qard Al-Hassan financial institution. Israel maintains that its operations are aimed at dismantling Hezbollah's operational capacity.

## Tehran rules out ceasefire

Iran on Wednesday ruled out the possibility of reaching a ceasefire with the US and Israel, saying it intends to continue responding to attacks against the country. "Certainly, we aren't seeking a ceasefire," Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said on US social media company X. "We believe the aggressor must be punished and taught a lesson that will deter them from attacking Iran again." The Iranian speaker accused Israel of perpetuating a recurring pattern of conflict and diplomacy. "The Zionist regime (Israel) has consistently perpetuated a vicious cycle of 'war, negotiations, ceasefire, then war again' throughout its disgusting history. We will break this cycle," he added.

## No LPG crunch in Karnataka, avoid panic booking: Min

**BENGALURU**

Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister KH Muniyappa on Wednesday said there is no shortage of domestic LPG cylinders in Karnataka, but the supply of commercial cylinders will face disruption.

After a meeting with officials of oil and gas companies, including Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum, Hindustan Petroleum and GAIL (India) Limited, he said the ongoing West Asia conflict has disrupted interna tional shipping route specifically in the Gu region.

He, however, clarified that domestic LPG supplies would remain stable and urged consumers not to panic or hoard cylinders.

"Karnataka requires around 1,000 metric tonnes of com mercial LPG daily, which is equivalent to about 50,000 commercial cylinders (19 kg). For domestic use, the state needs about 5,000 metric tonnes or nearly 3.5 lakh household cylinders (14.2 kg) daily," the minister said, adding that there was adequate supply of cooking gas for domestic purposes.

Muniyappa noted that India produces only about 30% of its LPG requirement, while the remaining 60–70% is imported, of which a lion's share of share of supply comes from the Gulf region.

QUICK READ

## SC allows passive euthanasia for man in coma for 13 years

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed passive euthanasia for a 32-year-old man who has remained in a permanent vegetative state for over a decade, in a first such order, on a plea by his family members, after noting they have exhausted every effort to care for him and continued to do so with unwavering dedication. A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan said it is the first judicial implementation of its 2018 Common Cause judgment, which recognised the right to die with dignity. On January 15, the court reserved for judgment a plea by the family of Harish Rana, who has been in a vegetative state for nearly 13 years, to withdraw life-support to him. The bench said Harish, a young, bright boy who met with a tragic, life-altering accident after falling from the fourth floor of his paying guest accommodation.

## CRPF unveils 'Shoot House' in Kashmir for elite training

**SRINAGAR:** The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has established a high-tech 'Shoot House' in Kashmir to enhance the specialised combat skills of its personnel. The facility is designed for live-fire, close-quarter battle and room-entry drills to prepare troops for high-risk operations. It features ballistic-rated, modular walls that can be reconfigured to simulate various real-life scenarios like hostage rescues. This modern initiative aims to keep the CRPF operationally elite against emerging security challenges in the region. "Equipped with modern technology, the initiative aims to keep the force operationally elite and better prepared for emerging security challenges," as per a CRPF statement. A 'shoot house', also known as a 'kill house', is a specialised, highly secure training structure designed for law enforcement and military personnel.

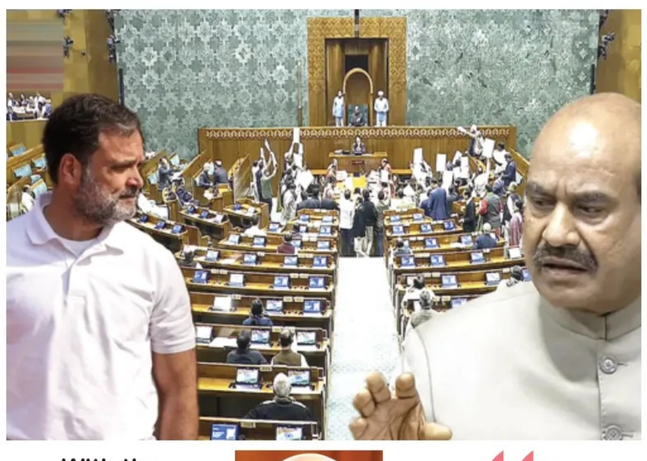
## No-trust motion against LS Speaker Om Birla defeated

**NEW DELHI**

The resolution seeking the removal of Om Birla as Speaker was on Wednesday defeated in Lok Sabha by a voice vote.

Amid protests and sloganeering by the opposition seeking an apology from Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Jagdambika Pal, who was in the chair, announced that the no-confidence motion was defeated.

Pal urged the opposition to take their seats so that he could put the motion to vote. But as the protests continued, he sought the vote of the House and the resolution was rejected by a voice vote, following which he adjourned the House for the day.



With the Oppn-moved no-confidence motion defeated, Birla continues in his role as Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

**Constitution assigns the Speaker the role of a mediator in the House and casting suspicion on the mediator weakens parliamentary traditions.**

—Amit Shah, Home Minister

**Shah rips apart Opposition over Om Birla's removal**

Speaking during the debate, Union Home Minister Amit Shah criticised the Opposition for bringing a no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, saying the Constitution assigns the Speaker the role of a mediator in the House.

He said casting suspicion on the mediator weakens parliamentary traditions. "Over the past 75 years, both Houses of Parliament have strengthened the foundations of India's democracy, and questioning the Speaker's reputation amounts to casting doubt on that deep-rooted democratic foundation," he added.

The opposition objected to certain remarks of Shah and started raising slogans and disrupting the proceedings. In response, Shah asserted that the House will be run by its own rules and not by the rules of a party.

Birla was not present in the House during the entire period of the debate.

EYES ON 'ENTE KERALAM'

## *Modi unveils 'Viksit Keralam' roadmap in Kochi*

**KOCHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday sought to reassure Keralites amid the crisis in West Asia while unveiling the BJP's vision for a "Viksit Keralam", as he launched the NDA's campaign for the upcoming assembly elections at a massive rally at the Jawaharlal Nehru International Stadium.

**'Govt won't leave Indians stranded'**

Referring to the large Malayali diaspora in the Gulf, Modi said the situation in West Asia had caused concern among families in Kerala but assured that the Union government would stand firmly with Indians abroad.

"Whenever our countrymen are in trouble overseas, we do not abandon them. Our missions and embassies are operating 24/7 helplines, and we will provide all help for our people in the Gulf," he said.

Stressing the government's commitment to boost renewable energy sources, he said India was bringing down its reliance on fossil fuels. In this context, he pointed out the laying of the foundation stone for a 50 MW floating solar power project at West Kallada in Kollam district earlier in an official event in Kerala. The initiative would strengthen Kerala's renewable energy capacity and contribute to the country's clean energy transition, he said.

**'BJP has larger plan for Keralam'**

Launching the BJP's "Viksit Keralam" campaign, he said the party aimed to transform Kerala into a hub of tourism, talent, and technology. Kerala, he said, could emerge as the country's first choice destination for wellness tourism, destination weddings, concerts, and global conferences.

**'Keralam can be an IT hub'**

Modi said the Centre had been supporting the modernisation of Kerala's infrastructure through several major projects and stressed that the BJP would work to develop the state into a hub for artificial intelligence and future technologies. "Our youngsters have immense talent. Many of them are building drones and innovative startups. We will ensure they get the right ecosystem to grow," he added.

# Archakas Assn demands better facilities for C category temple priests

**MYSURU**

K.S. Dixit, General Secretary of the Bengaluru Archakas Association, alleged that temples located in rural areas have been completely neglected among the temples administered under the Muzrai Department.

Speaking at a press conference at the Mysuru District Journalists' Association on Wednesday, he said that nearly 90 percent of the Muzrai temples are located in rural areas, and C-category temples in rural regions have been entirely neglected. The priests of C-category temples are paid a monthly "Tastik" allowance of ₹6,000, which is far below the minimum wage fixed by the government. With that money, priests are expected to manage their family expenses as well as purchase puja materials for the temples, which is causing considerable hardship.

Dixit urged the government to provide basic facilities such as cleanliness, toilets and bathrooms in these temples. All priests and attendants of C-category temples be provided with insurance security, pension, health cards and housing facilities.The Tastik allowance be increased from ₹6,000 to ₹10,000 and that free electricity be provided to C-category temples.

He demanded that temples in the state should not be brought under the authority of a separate governing body.

Manjunath, Shyamasundar Dixit, Govindraju and Nagaraju of the Akhila Karnataka Hindu Devalayagala Archaka, Agamikara and Upadhivantara Federation were present.

# Women Are the Foundation of the Nation's Progress – N. Srinivasan

**MYSURU**

International Women's Day is not merely a one-day celebration; it is a day for society to collectively commit itself to working for equality and respect for women, said N. Srinivasan, Administrative Officer of the Sri Yoganarasimha Swamy Temple in Vijayanagar.

Speaking at a simple programme held here which coincided with the Swati Nakshatra, as part of the International Women's Day celebrations, he said women are the foundation of the nation's progress and they are advancing in all fields. The day is observed to promote the elimination of gender discrimination, to fight against atrocities against women, and to ensure equal opportunities. Such programmes help boost confidence among women and convey a positive message to society. The achievements of India's Nari Shakti are a source of pride and serve as a strong reminder of women's transformative role in nation-building, he explained.

Srinivasan said that the country can become strong only when women are empowered. It is also an appropriate time to thank the women who play a vital role in their lives. As mothers, sisters, wives, colleagues and friends, women bring meaningful change to their lives. Therefore, International Women's Day provides a valuable opportunity to express gratitude to them, he said.

The event was held under the auspices of the Bhajana Mandali of the Mysuru Women's Association.

On the occasion, prasada was arranged for all the devotees who visited the temple under the leadership of the founder Nadoja Prof. Dr. Bhashyam Swamiji.

Former MUDA Chairman H. V. Rajeev, along with hundreds of devotees and women were present.

# Ugadi festival: Vontikoppal Panchanga distributed to citizens

**MYSURU**

In connection with the coming Ugadi festival, the Vontikoppal Panchanga was distributed after offering special prayers at the Ganapati Temple in Krishnamurthypuram in the city on Wednesday.

The programme was organized by the Karnataka Brahmin Development Council and the Mysuru District Brahmin Youth Forum.

Noted historian Dr. Shelwapillai Iyengar, who offered prayers to the Panchanga and formally launched the distribution, said that every ritual and development taking place on earth is already mentioned in the Panchanga according to the calculations of time. The Hindus follow the calendar based on lunar months, fortnights, tithis and nakshatras as determined in the Panchanga. In the Hindu Sanatana tradition, listening to the Panchanga and following auspicious timings (muhurta) has a history dating back thousands of years to the periods of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The younger generation should read the Panchanga more often to understand the significance of Sanatana Dharma.

Social worker Raghuram Vajpayee said that the Panchanga even records information related to eclipses, floods and wars based on the movements of celestial bodies, which reflects the strength of the astrological science contained in it. He said the Vontikoppal Panchanga has significant demand even in foreign countries and contains information ranging from village deity festivals to peace chants. The Panchanga is useful for all forms of life.

On this occasion, Mysuru District President of Karnataka Brahmin Development Council Kadakola Jagadish, Mysuru District Brahmin Youth Forum General Secretary Vikram Iyengar, compere Ajay Shastri, Jatti Prasad, priests Somashekhar, Radhakrishna, Guruprasad, Uday, and others were present.

# Folklore is learnt through observation: Mysuru Gururaj

**MYSURU**

Folklore is not something that can be memorized like a parrot lesson; it is something that must be learned by observing, said Mysuru Gururaj, member of the Karnataka Janapada Academy.

Speaking after inaugurating the valedictory function of the "Pada Janapada" free workshop on folk songs, dance, and musical instruments, organized by the Natya Pradarshaka Kalagala Samsthe and Research Centre at the Kirurangamandira in Kalamandira premises on Wednesday, he said that when someone who claims to predict the future asks a parrot to pick a card, the bird simply picks one at random and the person then interprets it as they wish. In the same way, folklore cannot be taught merely by sitting in a classroom. Instead, it is something that should be learned through observation and experience.

"Our folklore has spread and grown through word of mouth over generations. From childhood itself, we learn it by watching and experiencing it. Therefore, it is our responsibility to preserve and nurture it," he said.

Senior journalist Amshi Prasanna Kumar and Dr. Manu B. Menon, head of Ayur Mattam, were the chief guests. Santosh Kalavid, founder-secretary of the Natya institution, presided over the programme.

# Shivalinga consecrated at Sri Beereshwara temple in Varakodu

**MYSURU**

The Punar Pratishtapana (re-consecration) and Kumbhabhisheka rituals of the Sri Beereshwara Swamy Temple at Varakodu village in Mysuru taluk are being conducted with great religious fervour. As part of the ceremonies, a Shivalinga has been installed in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and various religious rituals are being performed.

The temple at Varakodu has been newly rebuilt, and several rituals have been taking place in the temple premises since March 10. As per traditional Vedic procedures, the Shivalinga has been ceremonially installed in the sanctum sanctorum. The installation ceremony was conducted under the leadership of priest Ganesh Dixit, in the presence of Guddappa Shivu, Mahadev and others. Several religious rituals were performed throughout the day.

This morning, special rituals such as Ganapathi Homa, prayers to the presiding deity and other religious ceremonies were conducted in the temple premises. In the evening at around 6 p.m., groups of devotees accompanied by traditional musical instruments arrived in a procession from the ancient Kalyani (temple tank) of Varakodu to the temple premises. Later, a ceremonial Deepa Arati was performed in the pond located in front of the temple according to traditional customs.

Devotees from various parts of the State have gathered to participate in the celebrations. In addition, Devara Kootas and devotees from villages such as Duddagere, Tayuru, Siddaramanahundi, Kalisiddanahundi, Bidarahallihundi and Ahalya Gadi have also taken part in the puja celebrations along with Basava and Veeramakka devotees.

On March 12 at 7.30 a.m., under the divine presence of Sri Niranjanandapuri Swamiji of Kaginale Mahasamsthana and Sri Shivanandapuri Swamiji of the branch mutt, and in the presence of Sri Guruswamy and Gurudeva of Varakodu Gadi Gurumutt, as well as Guddappa of the Gadi temple, rituals such as Ganapathi Puja, Navagraha Puja, Gopuja and Yogashala Pravesha will be performed at the Beereshwara Swamy Temple.

Later, a grand procession will be taken out from the Kalyani with 101 young girls, featuring rituals such as Majjana on Khelu Basavadeva, Nandi flag procession, Puja dance, Basava Sattige Suripani, Veeragase, and performances by several cultural troupes. After the procession, prasada distribution will be held at the temple.

# Candlelight Vigil held for world peace in Mysuru

**MYSURU**

Members of Mysuru Kannada Vedike held a candle light vigil appealing for the world peace.

They said in recent times, it has become unfortunate that developed nations and countries in the Middle East, including Iran, are engaging in conflicts with one another for their own political interests. Innocent lives are being lost while selfish political motives continue to dominate. The struggle for control over oil production and the exploitation of mineral resources has become a dangerous trend that is threatening peace across the world.

It is a matter of concern that such actions are pushing the world towards instability. Ironically, the United States, which is considered one of the leading powers in the world, is also facing criticism. President Donald Trump has drawn global attention for adopting what critics describe as an authoritarian approach and for unilaterally increasing tariffs, which has angered many countries.

The Mysuru Kannada Vedike urges the global community to follow the ideals exemplified by India—Sarve Jana Sukhino Bhavantu (May all people be happy) and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The world is one family). These values emphasize harmony, mutual respect, and collective well-being.

The organization calls upon all nations to work towards world peace and to ensure that the welfare of all living beings and the protection of nature are prioritized. Instead of promoting conflict and destruction, humanity must strive for peace, unity, and sustainable coexistence.

Those who participated in the silent vigil included Vedike President S. Balakrishna, Nala Beedi, Ravi Bogadi, Siddegowda, Gurubasappa, Sai Chamaraju Mandakalli, Cheluvarayaswamy, Beeda Babu, Ramesh, Palace Babu, Harish, Chinnappa, LIC Siddappa, Swamy Gowda, Hanekere Swamy, Govindaraju Shivugowda, Madappa, Sunil Gopi, Guide Swamy, Mahadevaswamy, Sunil, Swamy Kumbarkoppalu, Raitha Parva President Arun Kumar, and several others.

# One-Day Capacity Building Training for Physical Education Directors held

**MYSURU**

One-day capacity building training programme for Physical Education Directors was organized under the joint auspices of the University of Mysore Physical Education Directors' Association, the Office of the Joint Director of the Mysuru Regional Zone of the Department of Collegiate Education, and Maharani's Women's Arts College, Mysuru on Wednesday.

Dr. Srikant, Physical Education Director and Nodal Officer of the Department of Collegiate Education, was the resource person and delivered the training session. Another resource person, Aravind, the Accounts Manager at the Office of the Joint Director, Department of Collegiate Education, Mysuru, also provided training to the participants.

Inaugurating the programme, Prof. Anita M.S., Principal of the college, said that the responsibility of shaping students into physically and mentally strong individuals rests largely with Physical Education Directors.

Dr. Uday Kumar H.V., President of the Physical Education Directors' Association, said that Physical Education Directors and students in degree colleges are facing several challenges and issues. The workshop would provide an opportunity for discussion, consultation, and identification of appropriate solutions to these concerns.

Presiding over the programme, Dr. Prathima B.S., Joint Director of the Mysuru Regional Zone, Department of Collegiate Education, said that organizing a special workshop for Physical Education Directors is commendable. She emphasized that Physical Education Directors play an important role in nurturing students' interest in sports and in developing the ability to accept both victory and defeat with equal spirit.

Dr. Bhaskar K.S., Secretary of the Physical Education Directors' Association, welcomed the gathering. Dr. Muthuraj, Coordinator of the workshop and Librarian, delivered the vote of thanks. Dr. Sundari, Assistant Professor of Kannada, compered the programme, while Dr. Divya B.S., Assistant Professor of Economics, offered the invocation.

# MP Yaduveer seeks inclusion of Mysuru in "Urban Economic Zone" project

**MYSURU**

Mysuru–Kodagu Lok Sabha MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar has submitted a request to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to include Mysuru in the "Urban Economic Zone" scheme.

The Central Government, which is focusing on the development of cities that play a significant role in contributing to the country's economy, has now decided to extend special benefits to Mysuru as well.

During his meeting with the Finance Minister in New Delhi, the MP requested that Mysuru city be included in the "Urban Economic Zone" project announced in the Union Budget. Mysuru, known as the cultural capital, has earned global recognition and that including it in the project would help elevate the city to greater heights.

Providing details about the request, Yaduveer said that a memorandum had already been submitted to the Finance Minister seeking the inclusion of Mysuru in the Urban Economic Zone. When the matter was raised again on Wednesday, the Minister assured that immediate steps would be taken. if Mysuru is included in this scheme, it will open up opportunities to undertake various development initiatives. "Mysuru already possesses rich heritage and a unique environment. Development projects will be taken up in such a way that they do not harm this heritage," the MP said.

Yaduveer said consultations will be held with experts from different fields, leaders, public representatives, and citizens to gather suggestions and opinions before preparing a comprehensive development plan for Mysuru.

Under the scheme, modern infrastructure improvements will be undertaken in tier-two and tier-three cities and pilgrimage centres with populations of more than five lakh. As repeated requests have been made, Nirmala Sitharaman has assured that Mysuru will be included in the project, he said.

### 'ATTARA KACHERI' SET FOR HERITAGE REVIVAL

# Mysuru's Iconic Red Landmark to Get a New Lease of Life

**SHYAM SUNDAR VATTAM**

**MYSURU**

The historic Attara Kacheri, a landmark that has stood tall for more than 130 years, is set to receive a much-needed facelift. Once the bustling headquarters for both Mysuru and Chamarajanagar districts for several decades, the iconic red structure is now undergoing restoration work aimed at preserving its heritage and giving it a new purpose. The district administration has taken up a ₹1-crore project to address one of the major problems affecting the building—rainwater seepage inside the structure. Over the years, water leakage through the roof and walls has caused damage to the interiors. Since Attara Kacheri is a protected heritage structure, the restoration work has been entrusted to the Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage, which is carrying out the repair work with special care to maintain the building's original character.

Situated at a vantage point in the heart of Mysuru, Attara Kacheri once offered a spectacular panoramic view of the city. From its elevated location, one could see large stretches of Mysuru, extending all the way to the majestic Lalitha Mahal Palace in the distance. However, over time, the mushrooming of high-rise buildings across the city gradually blocked this scenic view, taking away one of the unique features of the historic structure. The name "Attara Kacheri" itself has an interesting origin. The word literally means "Eighteen Offices," referring to the 18 government departments that once functioned under a single roof in the building. In those days, the structure served as the central administrative hub of the region. As Mysuru city expanded and administrative needs grew, many departments eventually shifted to separate offices in different parts of the city. However, the office of the Deputy Commissioner continued to function here for many years until a new DC office complex was constructed in Nazarbad.

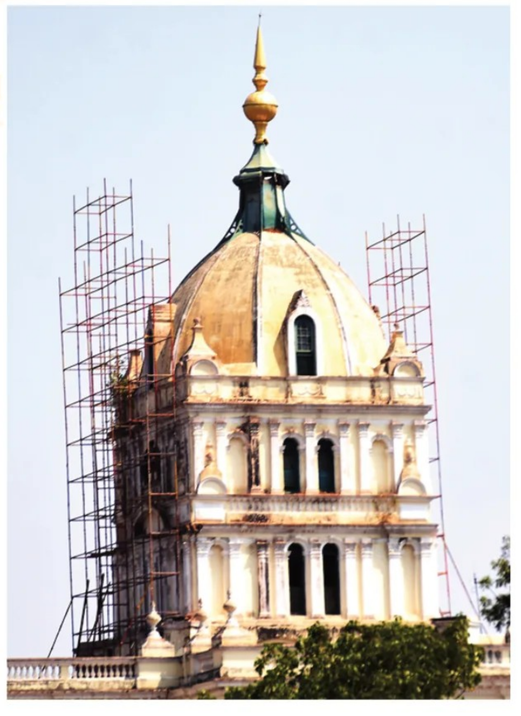
When the district administration operated from Attara Kacheri, the area around the building was always vibrant and bustling with activity. Officials, visitors, and staff moved in and out throughout the day, making it a lively administrative centre. After the offices were shifted, however, the once-busy building gradually lost its importance. Lack of regular maintenance allowed weeds to grow on its walls and roof, while dust accumulated inside the empty rooms. The deserted offices slowly became a refuge for rats, bats, and bandicoots.

Recognizing the heritage value of the structure, the district administration has now decided to convert the majestic building into a museum. The state government has sanctioned a token amount of ₹1 crore to begin the restoration process.

Workers from the Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage have already started repair work by erecting scaffolding around the dome and roof to fix the leaks. Officials say the work to stop rainwater seepage is expected to be completed before the onset of the monsoon. Once the structural repairs are completed, plans for setting up the museum inside the building will begin.

For the people of Mysuru, the restoration of Attara Kacheri is more than just a repair project—it is an emotional revival of a historic symbol. Every Mysurean hopes that the iconic building which once housed 18 departments will regain its former glory and keep alive the memories of the city's rich administrative past.

All pics by Hampa Nagaraju



## DON'T BECOME SLAVES TO AI TECHNOLOGY: KSOU VC warns

**MYSURU**

Students must prepare their research through their own hard work and dedication and must reduce their dependence on Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology and instead utilize their own knowledge in research, said Prof. Sharanappa Halase, Vice-Chancellor of the Karnataka State Open University.

Speaking after inaugurating a workshop on research methodologies organized at the Kaveri Auditorium by the Dr. Babu Jagjivan Ram Research Institute of KSOU in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare, he said that 345 students have been enrolled into research programs at Karnataka State Open University this year. Present-day research is gradually losing its originality, and therefore it has become essential to check plagiarism in research work. For this reason, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has included a paper on research ethics in research programs.

Prof Halase said the government has provided a grant of ₹5 lakh to organize a three-day workshop for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students, with facilities for food and accommodation. Students should make use of the opportunity to gain information related to research. They must prepare for competitive examinations and read NCERT textbooks. Whatever work students undertake, they must involve themselves in it wholeheartedly.

Prof. R. Mahesh, Senior Professor of the Bahadur Management Institute, said research today must be prepared from multiple dimensions and perspectives. Research should be socially relevant and beneficial to society. Information related to Artificial Intelligence technology is now widely visible in research activities. While AI technology helps guide research projects, it also tends to reduce the researcher's original effort. In some research works, honesty is almost absent. Technology should be used as a tool to gain benefits, but researchers should not become subservient to technology.

He also advised that research-related topics should be discussed in groups so that students can develop and compile better information. Evaluators should give utmost importance to integrity while assessing research work. Research must be meaningful to society and should be prepared in a way that benefits others. Dean of Karnataka State Open University, Prof. M. Ramanatham Naidu, said that students must gain deeper knowledge about research and understand research methodology, which is extremely important in academic studies.

Different disciplines and languages follow different methodologies; therefore, experts from various fields have been invited to conduct the workshop.

## DC Reddy presents awards to best performing Govt employees

**MYSURU**

Deputy Commissioner G Lakshmikanth Reddy G said that employees who perform well in private institutions are given various benefits including bonuses, and similarly, government employees who perform their duties efficiently will be honored with the Best Service Award.

Inaugurating the Best Service Award Presentation Ceremony for the year 2023, organized jointly by the District Administration and the Government Employees' Association here on Wednesday, he said that presenting awards in government service encourages employees and instills greater enthusiasm to perform their duties effectively. As times change, the challenges in government service are also increasing. Employees must develop the necessary skills to ensure accuracy in their work. The award-winning employees should serve as role models for their colleagues and inspire them to achieve similar recognition.

Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Yukesh Kumar said that the role of employees across all departments is crucial for the development of a state or nation. Such employees should be identified and honored by recognizing their hard work, efficiency, honesty, and dynamism. The visits by Chief Minister and other dignitaries to Mysuru district are common, and it is commendable that the officers and staff in the district carry out their duties with constant alertness to ensure that no lapses occur. The award recipients should become role models for other officers and staff and motivate them to earn similar recognition.

Dr. C. P. Arun Kumar, District President of the Karnataka State Government Employees' Association, said that there should be a system that encourages good work, as it motivates employees to perform better. The practice of giving the Citizens' Service Award to government employees began in 2006. Initially, only the award was presented, but since 2021, recipients have been honored with both a cash prize and the award. Award Winners:

The Best Service Award, along with a cash prize of ₹25,000, was presented to ten employees:

B. J. Gururaj, Assistant Executive Engineer, Cauvery Irrigation Corporation

Nazia Sultana, Assistant Labour Commissioner, Labour Department, Yashoda N, Joint Director, District Treasury, Rathi M. M, Senior Nurse, Health Department, Dr. Chidambara S, DVBDCO Officer, Health Department, Madhusudhan S. M, System Analyst / NSS Officer, Department of Collegiate and Technical Education, Kumuda Sharath, Joint Director, Food Department, Chandrashekar, Joint Director, Agriculture Department, Roopa, Nurse, Health Department, Rudresh, Deputy Director, Horticulture Department.

## Protestant Christian Body Seeks Higher Budget Allocation, Key Welfare Measures

**MYSURU**

The Federation of Protestant Christians – Diocese of All Protestant Churches (DAPC) has urged the Karnataka government to increase financial support and introduce several welfare measures for the Christian community, stating that the present allocation for the Karnataka Christian Community Development Corporation Limited (KCCDCL) is inadequate.

Addressing a press conference, Rev. Dr. Vinod M. Chacko, Archbishop of Karnataka under DAPC, said that although the government had allocated ₹93.50 crore in the 2026–27 State Budget, the amount represents only about a 10 per cent increase over last year's ₹85 crore and does not match the expanded responsibilities of the corporation.

The government had earlier announced ₹250 crore for KCCDCL in the 2025–26 Budget, but only ₹85 crore has been released so far, leaving ₹165 crore pending. The organisation urged the government to release the remaining funds immediately and implement a system similar to the SCSP/TSP model to ensure fair allocation for the Christian community.

DAPC also demanded that welfare schemes such as scholarships, hostels, educational assistance, coaching for competitive examinations, livelihood programmes and community development initiatives currently administered by the Directorate of Minorities be transferred to KCCDCL in proportion to the Christian population.

Among other demands, the organisation called for the establishment of separate hostels for Christian students and working professionals in Bengaluru, construction of Christian community halls in every district and taluk, and the creation of a "Christian Bhavan" in Bengaluru on the lines of Haj Bhavan to serve as a central hub for community activities.

The body also sought the creation of a Christian Heritage Museum in Bengaluru and Christian study and cultural centres in the four divisions of Karnataka to preserve the community's history and promote research.

Raising concerns over burial space, the organisation said many Christian burial grounds allotted during the British period are no longer sufficient due to the growing population and urged the government to allocate new burial grounds wherever required.

## REGIONALS COMMISSIONER PAYS A SURPRISE VISIT TO MYSURU TALUK OFFICE

**MYSURU**

Regional Commissioner of Mysuru Nitesh Patil visited the Mysuru Taluk Office in Mysuru on Wednesday and conducted an inspection.

After the inspection, he held a meeting with officials and staff and reviewed the progress of 1–5 cases and podi (land subdivision) cases, e-Pauti account progress, distribution of title deeds under Section 94-D, e-Swathu, pending RRT correction cases, and the progress details of the RRY module available online.

Patil also sought information regarding the status of Bhoomi pendency, Bhoo Suraksha, RCCMS, Bhoomi–Bhoo Suraksha, and e-Office related matters, and provided suggestions and instructions. Mysuru Tahsildar Mahesh and other officials were present at the meeting.

## QUICK READ

### Actor Dwarakish's daughter-in-law booked in chit fund assault case

**BENGALURU**

Police have booked the daughter-in-law of late Kannada actor Dwarakish after a 64-year-old man alleged she assaulted him with a broom when he demanded the return of his investment in a chit fund. According to police, Varsha Rai, wife of Samarth Dwarakish, was named in the complaint filed by Venkatamaramana Reddy. Investigators said Rai and her mother, Ratna Basavaraju, allegedly ran a chit fund and promised attractive returns to investors they befriended at their grocery shop in BHEL Layout, Rajarajeshwarinagar. Police said three FIRs have been registered accusing the duo of cheating investors of nearly ₹15 lakh. Authorities are investigating the allegations further.

### Health officers call off strike after talks with Karnataka ministers

**BENGALURU**

Members of the Karnataka Government Medical Officers' Association and the Karnataka State Health and Medical Education Department Employees' Central Association called off their strike following discussions with Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao and Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa. The decision came after the State government agreed to accept 13 of the associations' key demands, except the issue related to restrictions on private practice. The Health Minister assured that the matter would be reviewed and addressed later. Among the accepted demands were ensuring regular medicine supply to government hospitals, amendments to cadre and recruitment rules, publishing updated seniority lists, and clearing pending promotions.

### B'luru authority collects ₹7.5 lakh fine in tobacco enforcement drive

**BENGALURU**

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) collected nearly ₹7.5 lakh in fines after registering 1,609 violations during a special tobacco enforcement drive across the city. Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao said 2,027 enforcement operations were conducted across all 27 Assembly constituencies to ensure strict implementation of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003. The drive targeted smoking in public places, sale of loose cigarettes, tobacco sales near educational institutions and illegal sale of e-cigarettes. The Bengaluru South City Corporation recorded the highest violations with 409 cases and fines totalling ₹2.1 lakh. Bommanahalli constituency reported 103 violations.

# CM, Ministers attend dinner hosted by DKS, extend congratulations

## Dinner hosted by DCM marks six years of DK Shivakumar as KPCC chief

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, several ministers and Congress legislators attended a dinner hosted by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at a private hotel in Bengaluru to mark his completion of six years as president of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC).

The banquet, organised by Shivakumar, saw a large number of leaders gathering to congratulate him for successfully leading the party organisation for the past six years. The event also attracted political attention as it came amid ongoing discussions about leadership dynamics within the ruling party in Karnataka.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah congratulated Shivakumar and appreciated his efforts in steering the party during challenging political circumstances. He wished him well for his organisational leadership and his role in strengthening the Congress in the State.

Several ministers and MLAs attended the gathering, including Dr G Parameshwar, Satish Jarkiholi, HK Patil, Dinesh Gundu Rao, Zameer Ahmed Khan, Priyank Kharge, Krishna Byre Gowda, Lakshmi Hebbalkar and Madhu Bangarappa among others.

Legislators and party leaders across different factions of the Congress also attended the dinner and conveyed their greetings. Expelled BJP MLAs ST Somasekhar and Shivaram Hebbar were also present at the event.

In a message shared on social media, minister Krishna Byre Gowda praised Shivakumar's organisational ability and commitment to the party, stating that his dedication and leadership had helped the Congress return to power in Karnataka. He also highlighted Shivakumar's role in strengthening the party at the grassroots level despite political challenges and legal battles.

Similarly, minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar lauded Shivakumar's unwavering commitment to party workers and his leadership during difficult times. She expressed hope that the party would continue to grow under his guidance and that his service to the State and its people would continue.

The dinner party has sparked political curiosity as it comes amid speculation about possible leadership changes within the party organisation. Shivakumar's recent visit to Delhi had already fuelled discussions about internal political developments.

Observers believe the gathering may also be seen as a show of strength and support for the Deputy Chief Minister within the party ranks. At the same time, there are discussions about whether Shivakumar will continue as KPCC president after completing six years in the role.

The event has therefore added another layer to the ongoing political calculations within the State Congress leadership.

# Karnataka mulls single airport for three districts

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

Government explores regional airport model to serve Ballari, Vijayanagara and Koppal.

The Karnataka government is considering establishing a single airport to serve the districts of Ballari district, Vijayanagara district and Koppal district after mixed outcomes from the Centre's regional connectivity initiative, the UDAN scheme.

Infrastructure Development Minister MB Patil informed the Legislative Council that the government is assessing a viable model for regional air connectivity, noting that some airports struggled once the initial financial support under UDAN ended.

Responding to a question from BJP member YM Satish, Patil said passenger demand has been relatively low in certain regions, affecting the sustainability of smaller airports. He pointed out that airports in Kalaburagi and Bidar faced operational challenges after the three-year support period under the UDAN programme ended.

While flight services in Bidar have since resumed, the minister said the government does not want the proposed airport in Ballari to turn into a "white elephant" project due to inadequate passenger demand.

Patil explained that the government is studying the feasibility of setting up an airport at a strategic location capable of serving all three districts in the Kalyana Karnataka region. The move aims to ensure better utilisation of resources while improving connectivity in the area.

The proposal to establish an airport in Ballari dates back to 2010, when nearly 900 acres of land was acquired and handed over to Chennai-based MARG Srikrishnadevaraya Airport Private Ltd. However, the agreement was later cancelled after the company failed to begin construction within the stipulated two-year timeframe.

In October 2025, the state government invited tenders to appoint consultants to prepare a detailed project report for the proposed airport. However, residents and local leaders from Vijayanagara and Koppal districts have been demanding separate airport facilities for their regions.

Addressing these demands, Patil said constructing separate airports for each district may not be financially feasible. At the same time, he clarified that the land already acquired for the Ballari airport project would not be returned.

# First PU pass marks reduced from 35 to 33 from this year

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has reduced the minimum passing marks for First Pre-University (PU) students from 35 to 33, bringing it in line with the standards followed in other major boards. The decision, announced by the Department of School Education and Literacy, will benefit nearly six lakh students who appear for the exams every year.

Unlike the SSLC examination and Second PU examination, which are public examinations with centralised evaluation, answer scripts for First PU are assessed at the school or college level.

In July 2025, the government had already reduced the pass mark to 33 for SSLC (Class X, state board) and Second PU examinations, effective from the March 2026 exams, to align with other national boards such as the Central Board of Secondary Education.

Officials said the latest move aims to maintain uniformity in evaluation methods and improve academic standards across the state's education system. An official order stated that the same minimum pass percentage is now being extended to First PU students.

To implement the decision, the Karnataka Pre-University Examination (Method of Evaluation) Rules, 2025 will be amended to reflect the revised passing criteria.

According to S Bharat, Director of the Department of Pre-University Education, the change ensures consistency across the Pre-University system, as the passing percentage for Second PU is already fixed at 33.

First PU examinations are expected to conclude soon, with results likely to be announced by March 31.

Education experts and lecturers' associations have welcomed the decision. AH Ningegowda, president of the Karnataka State Pre-University College Lecturers' Association, said the move would create a level playing field for students across different boards.

However, the lecturers' association has also warned of a possible boycott of paper valuation if some of its demands are not addressed. One key concern is a proposal to transfer certain administrative, disciplinary, financial and coordination powers from deputy directors of PU education to Chief Executive Officers of zilla panchayats.

The association argued that such a move could affect the autonomy of the PU education department. Meanwhile, the department has submitted a proposal to the finance department aimed at improving transparency and administrative efficiency in the system.

# Driver arrested for ₹13 lakh jewellery theft

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

A car driver has been arrested in Bengaluru for allegedly stealing gold jewellery worth ₹13 lakh from the house of his employer's relative after closely observing the valuables during family functions. The accused, identified as Abhilash, had been working as a driver for nearly ten years. Police said he had been employed within the limits of the Amruthahalli Police Station area for the past two years. According to investigators, Abhilash regularly accompanied his employer's family to social gatherings, including weddings and other family events. During these occasions, he reportedly noticed the gold and diamond jewellery worn by members of the family. Police said that repeated exposure to the valuables during such events gradually led him to plan a theft. Officials added that the accused had developed aspirations for a more luxurious lifestyle and was unwilling to continue in the same job for several more years.

# BMTC launches eight feeder buses for Namma Metro Yellow Line

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

The Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has introduced eight dedicated feeder bus services to improve last-mile connectivity for commuters using the Namma Metro Yellow Line connecting RV Road and Bommasandra.

According to officials, the feeder services will mainly cater to commuters travelling to and from the Hosa Road Metro Station, Singasandra Metro Station and Kudlu Gate Metro Station. The buses will link these stations with nearby residential layouts, commercial areas and key junctions to ease access to the metro network. Transport authorities said the move is aimed at strengthening last-mile connectivity for passengers and encouraging greater use of metro services once the Yellow Line becomes operational.

The feeder buses will operate during evening hours from 6 pm to 9:40 pm. During peak hours, the frequency of services will range between 15 and 30 minutes to ensure smoother movement of passengers between metro stations and surrounding neighbourhoods. Officials said the initiative is expected to benefit daily commuters and reduce dependency on private transport for short distances.

# Blinkit delivery agent booked for assaulting customer in Koramangala

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

An argument between a customer and a delivery executive in Bengaluru's Koramangala area allegedly turned violent, leaving the customer with a fractured nose. A case has been registered following the incident that occurred in Koramangala 8th Block.

The victim, identified as Paul Vidayathil, had ordered items through the quick commerce platform Blinkit. According to the complaint, Paul was staying on the second floor of a residential building when the delivery executive arrived with the order.

Police said the delivery worker, identified as Joseph, had reached the location to deliver the items but was reportedly heading towards the fourth floor of the building. At that point, Paul contacted the delivery executive and asked him to come to the second floor, where he was waiting to collect the order.

Investigators said the situation soon led to a disagreement between the two. During the argument, the dispute allegedly escalated and Joseph reportedly punched Paul in the face. The blow caused a fracture to the customer's nose, resulting in a serious injury.

Following the assault, Paul required medical treatment. Due to the severity of the nasal fracture, he later travelled to Kerala to undergo surgery.

After receiving treatment, Paul filed a formal complaint at the Koramangala Police Station accusing the delivery executive of physically attacking him.

Based on the complaint, police have registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Joseph and begun an investigation into the incident.

# Agriculture College proposed at Brahmavar

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

Karnataka Agriculture Minister N. Cheluv.arayaswamy said the government will place a proposal before an expert committee to establish an agriculture college at Brahmavar in Udupi district.

Replying to a starred question raised by Kiran Kumar Kodgi, MLA from Kundapur constituency, in the Legislative Assembly, the minister said the previous government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party had cancelled admissions to agricultural diploma colleges. However, the present government led by the Indian National Congress has issued orders allowing admissions again to such institutions.

Cheluvarayaswamy said the state government has constituted an expert committee under the chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner to examine proposals related to establishing new agricultural colleges across Karnataka.

The committee will study various aspects including strengthening existing agricultural universities, the need for new colleges and the infrastructure required to support them. A proposal to start an agriculture college at Brahmavar will be submitted to the committee for detailed examination.

The minister added that the government will first address shortcomings in existing agricultural colleges before approving new ones. Issues such as infrastructure facilities, availability of teaching staff and the demand for agricultural graduates will be carefully assessed.

He also noted that around 300 acres of land is available at the Agricultural Research Centre in Brahmavar. After obtaining approval from the expert committee, the proposal will be forwarded to the Finance Department for further consideration.

**SETBACK FOR DARSHAN**

# *Parappana Agrahara jail tightens rules after 'VIP treatment' video row*

**CH NEWS,** BENGALURU

Authorities at Parappana Agrahara Central Prison have introduced stricter regulations after a viral video allegedly showing Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa receiving special treatment inside the jail sparked widespread controversy.

The development prompted officials of the Karnataka Prisons and Correctional Services Department to review existing procedures and tighten rules governing facilities and interactions available to inmates.

Currently, Alok Kumar is serving as the Director General and head of the prison department. Soon after assuming charge, he initiated a review of prison regulations to ensure strict adherence to jail rules and prevent any inmate from receiving privileges beyond those permitted under the law.

Sources said the revised regulations have particularly impacted Darshan and individuals associated with him, often referred to as the "D Gang". With stricter implementation now in place, several requests reportedly submitted by the group have either been rejected or placed under closer scrutiny.

Earlier, Darshan and some inmates linked to him had submitted applications seeking certain facilities inside the prison premises. Among the requests were permission for television access and additional walking privileges. However, prison authorities clarified that only facilities

specifically allowed under existing prison rules would be provided to inmates.

Another request reportedly sought permission to receive home-cooked food from outside the prison. Officials, however, denied the request, stating that allowing home food would violate the current prison regulations.

Darshan had also submitted an application requesting permission to give interviews within the prison premises. While the matter was already under consideration in court, prison authorities simultaneously introduced additional guidelines regulating interviews with inmates.

Under the revised rules, interviews will only be permitted under limited circumstances. For instance, meetings may be allowed once a month if an inmate is seriously ill or injured and unable to walk.

Other conditions include situations involving a death in the inmate's family or a medical emergency, which may allow limited interaction. Interviews may also be permitted within two months before an inmate's release to help discuss employment opportunities, accommodation or counselling arrangements.

Additionally, special consideration may be given if the visitor is a differently-abled person or a pregnant woman.

Officials said the new guidelines apply uniformly to all inmates. As a result, Darshan's requests, including the interview application, have reportedly not received approval under the tightened rules.

With every request now subject to stricter scrutiny, the revised prison procedures are emerging as a significant setback for the actor inside the jail.

QUICK READ

## State Child Rights panel to tour Chitradurga district

**CHITRADURGA**

The Karnataka State Child Rights Protection Commission will conduct a district tour in Chitradurga on March 17, led by member Dr. K.T. Thippeswamy. During the visit, progress review meetings of Holalkere Taluk Child Protection Committee will be held from 10 am to 1:30 pm, followed by a review of Hosadurga Taluk Child Protection Committee from 2 pm to 4:30 pm. The initiative aims to monitor child protection activities, evaluate implementation of welfare schemes, and strengthen local child rights systems. Officials and committee members are expected to attend and provide updates on ongoing programs.

## SSLC exam guidance via live phone program

**CHITRADURGA**

Akashvani Chitradurga FM Center will host a live phone-in program on March 12 to guide students for this year's SSLC annual exam. Deputy Director M.R. Manjunath, Education Officer Mohammad Inayat Ullah, and Subject Inspector K.G. Prashanth will answer calls from students, parents, and the public between 10:05 am and 11:05 am. Calls can be made to 9448640273, 9141970272, or 08194-295649. Additionally, a live dialogue with G.D. Chittanna Seegehatti on "Cultural Identity of Chitradurga Tribal Communities" will air at 9:15 pm, hosted by Dr. Naveen Maskal, and can be accessed online worldwide.

## Gas cylinder stolen amid supply shortage worries

**CHANNAPATNA**

A gas cylinder was stolen from the house of Krishnappa in Kanakanagar, Channapatna, amid ongoing shortages linked to the Israel-Iran conflict. The theft occurred when the household was empty, and the servant fled with the full cylinder. CCTV footage captured the thief carrying the cylinder from the compound. Residents, already anxious about the limited gas supply, now face added concerns over thefts. The incident has been reported to the Channapatna Town police, who have registered a case and begun investigation. Authorities urged households to remain cautious and secure cylinders properly.

# Shivakumar's six-year leadership lauded

### Balakrishna praised Shivakumar for reorganizing the party, predicting 138 seats, and ensuring Congress' strong majority during COVID-19 challenges

**MAGADI**

MLA H.C. Balakrishna lauded the six-year tenure of D.K. Shivakumar as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president, calling it highly successful and a major boost for the party. Speaking to reporters in Magadi, he said Shivakumar's leadership strengthened the party at the grassroots level even during challenging times.

Balakrishna highlighted that during Shivakumar's term, the state faced the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the BJP government was in power. Despite these difficulties, Shivakumar collaborated with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to reorganize the party effectively.

He noted that Shivakumar had confidently predicted the Congress would win 138 seats before the elections, and it was his organizational skills and persistent efforts that helped the party secure a strong majority.

The MLA also praised Shivakumar's role in implementing popular government guarantees that benefited citizens across the state. Party workers and leaders celebrated Shivakumar's six-year achievements with a banquet, expressing their respect and appreciation for his contributions.

Responding to questions about Shivakumar continuing as KPCC president, Balakrishna emphasized that he remains committed to the party high command's decisions and will respect any leadership directives.

The event was attended by former Taluk Panchayat Standing Committee President Dhananjaya Naik, ex-Municipal Council members Rupesh, Shivakumaru, Ramya Narasimha Murthy, Anand, and TAPCMS Director M.R. Manjunath, among others. The gathering reflected widespread acknowledgment of Shivakumar's leadership in strengthening the Congress party and guiding it to electoral success.

## M.H. Prakash becomes president of new rotary club

**RAMANAGARA**

Journalist M. H. Prakash took charge as the charter president of the newly formed Rotary Ramgarh Rockers club during a ceremony held at Krishnasmriti Kalyana Mantapa on Monday evening. Advocate Nagesh assumed office as the general secretary of the new unit.

The event marked the official launch of the new Rotary club in Ramanagara. District Governor Sridhar formally handed over the leadership responsibility to M.H. Prakash and wished the club success in its future service activities.

Addressing the gathering, Sridhar said youth should actively participate in service organizations like Rotary International to build leadership qualities and develop a spirit of helping society. He expressed hope that the new club would work for the welfare of the community and carry forward the values of Rotary.

Speaking after assuming office, M.H. Prakash said that Rotary is a strong platform for individuals who wish to contribute to society through service. He thanked all members for electing him as the first president of the club and promised to carry out the responsibility with dedication.

He added that with the cooperation of members, the club will organize various social service programs and community welfare activities in the coming days.

During the event, several achievers from different fields were felicitated for their contributions to society. Among them were environmental activist Saalu Maradana Ninganna, theatre personality Sachchidan Adamurthy, and educationist Chikkamani Puttamadaya.

The club also distributed notebooks and sports equipment to students of a nearby government primary school as part of its first community initiative.

# Justice Shilpa launches district child rights program

**CHIKKABALLAPUR**

The session on Karnataka State Child Protection Policy 2016 (Revision-2023) enhanced awareness among officers, school staff, and officials, inaugurated by Justice B. Shilpa

A special awareness program on child rights and protection policies was organized on Wednesday at the Chikkaballapur Taluk Panchayat Hall. The program was jointly conducted by the Karnataka State Child Rights Protection Commission, Chikkaballapur District Legal Services Authority, District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Police Department, School Education and Literacy Department, College Education Department, Women and Child Development Department, and District Child Protection Unit.

The session focused on the Karnataka State Child Protection Policy 2016 (Revision-2023) and aimed to enhance understanding among participating officers, school principals, and staff about safeguarding child rights. Honorable Senior Civil Judge and Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, Justice B. Shilpa, inaugurated the awareness program.

Senior Police Child Welfare Officer Prakash R, Women and Child Development Officer Venkate Gowda R.K., District Child Protection Officer Nautaj B., school heads, principals, headmasters, supervisors, teachers, non-teaching staff, kitchen staff, training teachers, guest teachers, organization heads, vehicle drivers, SDMC President, and other members participated in the program.

The initiative emphasized coordinated efforts across departments to ensure the safety, welfare, and education of children in the district. Attendees were briefed on legal frameworks, policy updates, and best practices for monitoring and reporting child rights violations.

Justice Shilpa highlighted the importance of collaborative action and active participation from all stakeholders to create a secure and supportive environment for children in schools, colleges, and communities.

The program concluded with a pledge to strengthen child protection measures across the district through awareness, training, and strict implementation of existing laws.

## Global Conflicts Raise Gas Shortage Concerns in Karnataka

**BENGALURU**

Wars around the world may seem far away, but their impact is often felt in everyday life. Experts say global conflicts are now affecting fuel supplies, cooking gas prices and the daily routines of people in many places, including India.

History shows that wars bring suffering not only on battlefields but also to ordinary citizens. When conflict erupts in regions that produce oil and gas, supply chains across the world become unstable. Countries that depend on imports, such as India, begin to face pressure in energy supply and rising costs.

In recent months, people in Karnataka have been discussing the shortage of cooking gas cylinders in some areas. Cooking gas has become an essential part of modern life. In earlier days, families used firewood and coal for cooking, but today most households rely on gas cylinders because they are clean, fast and convenient.

Through the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, the central government helped many poor families get gas connections. As a result, the use of LPG increased rapidly across the country and in Karnataka as well. However, recent reports say some cities are experiencing a shortage of commercial gas cylinders.

Restaurants and small hotels in cities like Bengaluru and Kalaburagi are facing difficulties due to reduced supply. Some eateries have cut down their menu items, while others are struggling to continue normal operations. Street food vendors and catering businesses are also affected.

Experts say global conflicts in West Asia have influenced the supply of oil and gas, creating pressure on imports. Strengthening distribution, preventing hoarding and encouraging alternative energy options may help reduce the problem and ensure stable fuel supply for everyone.

## Officials urge accurate data in digital census

**CHITRADURGA**

Sub-Divisional Officer K. J. Kantaraj said that accurate information is very important for the success of the upcoming digital census and urged field officials to work with responsibility.

He spoke while inaugurating a three-day training workshop for field-level trainers for the Census of India 2027 held at the Chitradurga Zilla Panchayat hall in the city on Wednesday. The workshop was organized to train officials who will guide enumerators during the census process.

Kantaraj said the census plays a key role in the development of the country. Earlier, census data was collected manually, but this time information will be recorded digitally through a mobile application. According to him, the use of technology will help reduce mistakes and make data collection faster and more reliable.

He explained that the first census in India began in 1872 and has been conducted every ten years since 1951 after independence.

The census scheduled for 2021 was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The upcoming census will help the government understand the social, economic, educational and family conditions of people and prepare future development plans.

Officials also said that citizens will have the option of self-enumeration to submit their details online. Enumerators have been asked to create awareness among the public about this facility and ensure that correct information is recorded by visiting every household.

Chief Planning Officer C. S. Gayatri said the digital process will make the census more systematic. Self-enumeration will be held from April 1 to 15, house listing from April 15 to May 15, and the population census during October and November.

Election Tahsildar Bibi Fatima and other officials attended the training workshop.

*The magistrate assured uninterrupted gas supply, warned against panic buying, and stated illegal commercial diversion of domestic cylinders invites strict action*

## Chitradurga assures adequate cooking gas supply

**CHITRADURGA**

District Magistrate T. Venkatesh has assured residents that cooking gas supply in Chitradurga district remains sufficient, dispelling public concerns arising from the ongoing war in the Middle East. Speaking at a meeting of sales officers from IOCL and BPCL held at the District Magistrate's office on Wednesday, he confirmed that domestic gas stocks are adequate and distribution will continue normally.

The magistrate emphasized that consumers should not rush to gas agencies or create unnecessary queues out of fear of shortages. "There is no need for the public to worry, and the supply of domestic cooking gas cylinders will remain uninterrupted," he said. He warned that any individual diverting domestic cylinders for commercial purposes would face strict action under the law.

During the meeting, District Magistrate Venkatesh reviewed current stock levels and distribution plans with company officials to ensure smooth supply. He highlighted the importance of accurate reporting by gas agencies to prevent misinformation and public anxiety.

Additional Deputy Commissioner B.T. Kumaraswamy, Joint Director of the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department Shidrama Marihala, IOCL Sales Officer Bharat Chandra, and BPCL Sales Officer Sushrima Behra were present at the meeting.

The authorities urged residents to continue regular purchasing habits and avoid panic buying, assuring that both domestic and commercial cooking gas needs in Chitradurga district will be fully met in the coming weeks.

GIRIDHARI DANCE SPECTACL

# *Varsha Raviprakash's dance captivates B'luru audience*

**TUMKUR**

Renowned Bharatanatyam artiste Varsha Raviprakash from Tumkur recently mesmerized audiences in Bengaluru with a spectacular dance production titled "Giridhari."

The performance, presented by the Swaravi Arts Foundation, combined classical Bharatanatyam traditions with modern technology, creating a unique cultural experience for viewers.

The event was held at the Dayananda Sagar Auditorium and was based on the story of Govardhanagiri and the divine love between Radha and Krishna. Through graceful dance movements, expressive storytelling, and original music, the team explored the deep question of why Radha loved Krishna so deeply.

The production stood out for its innovative stage design.

Holographic technology was used to depict Indraloka, Bhuloka, and other mythological settings, making the stage appear like the magical world of Gokula. The visual effects, lighting, and digital graphics brought the ancient story alive and left the audience amazed throughout the performance.

The choreography was jointly created by Varsha Raviprakash and creative director Suhas J. Lighting design was handled by Surya N. Rao, while the music was composed by Venky G. The artistic direction was guided by G. G. Mustafa Khan.

The grand production involved 75 Bharatanatyam dancers and a team of more than 100 artists and technicians. Together they created a powerful blend of classical dance and modern theatre techniques.

Speaking before the performance, Varsha Raviprakash said "Giridhari" was born from a dream to show that Bharatanatyam has no limits. She added that when tradition and imagination meet, magical moments can be created on stage.

The performance was appreciated by classical dance lovers and first-time viewers alike, marking a new chapter in blending tradition with technology.

## Authorities Issue Guidelines for Smooth SSLC Exam Conduct

**CHITRADURGA**

Additional Deputy Commissioner B.T. Kumaraswamy has issued strict instructions to ensure that the SSLC annual examinations in the district are conducted in a smooth, systematic, and transparent manner. Speaking at a preliminary meeting at the District Collector's office on Wednesday, he emphasized coordination among officials to avoid any confusion and lapses during the exams.

He directed that all examination materials, especially question papers, be handled with utmost security. A three-member committee including the Tahsildar, BEO, and a school principal will oversee distribution. Special arrangements have been made for disabled students, placing them on the ground floor, and for continuous transport of materials without unnecessary stops. Clean drinking water, functioning toilets, and first-aid facilities will be ensured at all centers, with the District Health Officer deploying health personnel.

Security has been tightened, with police deployed at 84 centers and a temporary security room established at St. Joseph's School for safe storage of answer sheets.

# Collector stresses safe water and clean Indira canteens

Collector urged officials to promote wet-dry waste separation through awareness programs in schools, colleges, industries, and public events

**MANDYA**

Mandya District Collector Dr. Kumar directed officials to give top priority to the quality of drinking water supplied to the public, stating that safe and clean water is essential for good health.

Speaking at a progress review meeting of urban local bodies held at the District Collector's office, he said that contaminated water can cause serious health problems. Therefore, local bodies must ensure that sewage water does not leak into drinking water pipelines or mix with the supply at any point.

The Collector also stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness and hygiene at Indira Canteens. He instructed authorities to ensure that food served in the canteens meets the quality standards fixed by the government. Clean surroundings and purified drinking water must also be provided to visitors.

Under the Swachh Sarvekshan Abhiyan, he asked officials to create awareness among the public about separating wet and dry waste at home. Awareness programmes should be conducted in schools, colleges, industries and crowded public places. Activities such as walkathons and marathons should also be organised to spread the message of cleanliness.

The Collector further said that funds provided by the government under various schemes must be properly utilised to provide basic facilities to citizens.

To control the stray dog problem in urban areas, he directed officials to focus on sterilisation and vaccination programmes and to establish shelters for stray animals. Dangerous dogs should be shifted to shelters.

Officials were also instructed to speed up development works, improve solid waste management, and ensure timely property tax collection before the end of March.

Several officials and municipal representatives attended the meeting.

# Farmers burn tobacco bales protesting price crash

**HUNSUR**

Hundreds of tobacco farmers staged a protest in Hunsur taluk after a sudden fall in tobacco prices at local auction markets. Angry growers burned tobacco bales and tyres on the road and blocked traffic to express their frustration over the declining rates.

The protest began at the tobacco auction markets in Kattemalawadi and Javanikuppe where auctions were being held on several platforms. Farmers stopped the auction process on platforms 2, 3, 62 and 64 and walked out of the market yard. They later gathered on the road and began a demonstration demanding better prices for their produce.

Farmers said that good quality tobacco that was earlier selling for around ₹275 per kilogram had suddenly dropped to about ₹220 on Wednesday. This decline of nearly ₹50 per kilogram has caused heavy losses to growers who spent large amounts on cultivation and processing.

Manju, a farmer from Elemuddanahalli village, said that the sharp fall in price had shocked farmers.

Many growers shouted slogans against officials and expressed anger over what they called unfair pricing in the auction markets.

After the protest at the auction yard, farmers marched to the Tahsildar's office in Hunsur town. They met Tahsildar Manjunath and requested that a meeting be held with the District Collector, public representatives and officials to discuss the issue and find a solution.

Meanwhile, auctions resumed at the Kattemalawadi market with better prices ranging between ₹255 and ₹260 per kilogram for good quality tobacco. The average price was around ₹230, while lower grade tobacco fetched about ₹165 per kilogram.

*Rishi Anand reviewed records and urged staff to provide clean water, electricity, toilets, and timely nutritious food for children*

# ZP CEO reviews development works in Padekanur

**VIJAYAPURA**

Chief Executive Officer of Vijayapura Zilla Panchayat Rishi Anand inspected various development works in Padekanur village of Talikoti taluk and directed officials to complete the pending works on priority.

During his visit, he inspected the Anganwadi centre in Padekanur village under Konnur Gram Panchayat. He instructed staff to maintain cleanliness around the Anganwadi and ensure a healthy environment for children. He also asked them to focus on improving the learning abilities of children and give importance to quality education.

Rishi Anand checked several records including attendance registers of staff and children and health check-up reports. He stressed the need to provide basic facilities such as clean drinking water, electricity and toilets at the centre. He also instructed staff to ensure the timely distribution of nutritious food to children.

Since the summer season has already begun, he advised Anganwadi workers to ensure that children stay in shaded areas and are protected from heat. He also directed staff to maintain proper hygiene in the kitchen where food is prepared for the children.

Later, the CEO visited the Government Ayurveda Clinic in the village and reviewed the arrangements made for patients. He also inspected the ongoing CC road and sewerage works in the village and discussed the need for additional development works between Padekanur and Konnur villages.

After reviewing the progress, he instructed the Panchayat Raj Engineering Department officials to complete the road construction work between Padekanur and Hallur villages within the stipulated time and maintain quality standards.

Officials including engineers and taluk panchayat staff were present during the inspection visit.

# Mar 17 Protest in Bidar to Challenge Internal Reservation Report

**BIDAR**

The meeting of the executive committee was held at Hotel Vrindavan, where leaders discussed the issues related to internal reservation and finalized the plan for organising a major protest in the city. During the meeting, members deliberated on the impact of the internal reservation report and outlined strategies for the upcoming agitation.

Speaking on the occasion, Mahesh Goranalkar stated that the implementation of internal reservation has resulted in discrimination against members of the right-hand communities, particularly in the selection process for education and government employment.

He said that the existing roster system has caused injustice to several communities and that the planned protest aims to demand correction of these issues.

Goranalkar further alleged that certain attempts are being made to deliberately defame ministers belonging to the right-hand communities and create unrest within the Dalit community.

According to him, the proposed protest will act as a strong response to such developments and highlight the concerns of the affected communities.

He also announced that letters would be written to concerned MLAs and ministers requesting them to raise the issue in appropriate forums and speak out against what he described as injustice faced by right-hand communities due to the internal reservation system.

Appealing for widespread participation, Goranalkar called upon Ambedkarite activists, members of right-hand communities, government and semi-government employees, retired staff, political leaders from different parties, students, graduates, women and youth to take part in the protest in large numbers.

He said that the agitation is being organised not only to address present concerns but also to secure a better and fairer future for the coming generations.

Several leaders and committee members attended the meeting and expressed their support for the planned protest. Among those present were executive committee members Arun Patel, Pavan Mithare, Sanjukumar Sagar, Pradeep Natekar, Rahul Dange and Prakash Ravan.

# Mandya Police launch civilian firearm training program

**MANDYA**

The Mandya District Police will provide civilian firearm training at the District Armed Reserve (DAR) Force ground for seven days, from March 23 to March 29. Citizens interested in participating can submit their applications between March 15 and March 21 at the Mandya DAR Armory, along with the prescribed fee.

Applicants must include a residence certificate, Aadhar card, and a certificate from the local police station confirming that no criminal cases have been registered against them and that they possess good character. The program will include target practice, for which participants are required to bear the cost of bullets used during training. The training sessions are scheduled daily from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. Candidates must attend all sessions and are instructed to wear white pants, a white T-shirt, white shoes, and bring a ground sheet. The sessions will be supervised by trained police personnel to ensure safety and proper handling of firearms.

DSP S. Rachaiah of the Mandya DAR unit will oversee the training program, and citizens can contact him at 9480804806 for detailed information and guidance. The District Superintendent of Police emphasized the importance of the program, urging the public to take advantage of this opportunity to develop firearm safety skills and enhance personal security in a responsible manner.

The initiative is part of the district police's ongoing efforts to train and empower citizens in handling firearms safely.

# Mandya youth encouraged to embrace sportsmanship

**MANDYA**

Prof. Vishnu Shinde, Head of Akkamahadevi University, has urged the youth of Mandya district to develop sportsmanship and take a keen interest in athletics. Speaking at the inauguration of the District Level Sports Meet-2026 at Sir M. Visvesvaraya Stadium, he said that India's recent victory in the 2026 T20 World Cup has inspired young people to embrace the spirit of sports. The program was organized jointly by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Youth Empowerment and Sports Department, Mandya University, and various youth and women's boards of the district. Prof. Shinde highlighted the growing participation of women in sports at the national and international level, saying it enhances respect, dignity, and career opportunities for women. "Regular involvement in sports develops both the mind and body, improves health, and strengthens mental resilience," he added, urging young men and women to pursue sports consistently.

National Service Scheme Officer M.B. Pramila emphasized that sports play an increasingly important role in society and encouraged the youth to aim for excellence at national and international levels.

District Youth Coordination Officer Shruti and Physical Education Teacher Usharani were also present. Officials encouraged students to adopt sports as a part of daily life, noting that athletic engagement not only reflects personal strength but also showcases the district's talent and commitment to excellence.

# Judge Urges Women to Know Laws for Equal Rights

**AFZALPUR**

Women should be aware of laws so they can live with dignity and equality in society, said senior civil judge Vinayak Mayannavar while speaking at a legal awareness program in Afzalpur town.

The event was organized at the Government First Grade College to mark International Women's Day. It was jointly arranged by the Taluka Legal Services Committee, the Lawyers Association, and the Government First Grade College. Judge Mayannavar inaugurated the program and addressed students and participants. He said every woman should understand her legal rights and protections. Awareness about laws helps women face challenges with confidence and ensures they are treated equally with men. He stressed that women should never tolerate violence, pressure, or discrimination in any form.

The judge also spoke about social problems such as child marriage, forced marriage, and dowry.

**SPECIAL DISTRICT COURT NO.1 TO DEAL WITH MCOP CASES AT COIMBATORE**
**(SPECIAL DISTRICT JUDGE NO.1)**
**M.C.O.P.CFR - 15105 of 2025**
**Vinoth Palanisamy ... Petitioner**
**-Vs-**
**G. Christoper,** S/o. Gnanaseelan, 46 Years, No.637, 5th Phase, Mig N Block, Housing Board Colony, Yelahanka, Bangalore - 560 064.
**... 1st Respondent**

**NOTICE TO 1ST RESPONDENT**

Take notice that the above **M.C.O.P. C.F.R. No.15105 of 2025** has been filed before this Hon'ble Court by the petitioner seeking relief against the respondent. The case is posted for hearing on **01.04.2026 at 10.30 A.M.** The respondent is hereby directed to appear before this Hon'ble Court either in person or through an advocate on the said date and time, failing which the matter will be heard and decided ex-parte.

**S. Satheesh, B.Com., BL., Advocate,**
Coimbatore - 18, Tamilnadu.

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To place a classified ad contact:
080-41209042

**NAME CHANGE**

I, **MUHAMMAD AMJAD**, S/o Muhammad Mohsin, Resident of No 22/5-4, G Floor, 4th Main, Bismillah Nagar, Dharma ramp College Post, Bengaluru 560029, have changed my name to **MOHAMMED AMJAD** , Vide Affidavit Dated 10.03.2026 before notary V. RAJASHEKHARA, Bengaluru

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, JAGADISHAGOUDA S/o SIDDANAGOUDA R/o Kadoor, Yerigonal, Kushtagi, Koppal, Karnataka-583281, have changed the name of my minor son VIRESHAGOUDA aged 12 years and he shall hereafter be known as VEERANAGOUDA J PATIL.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, RANJIT MOHAN S/o VG MOHAN KUMAR R/o 120, 3rd Cross, Bds Layout, Hegde Nagar, Ganesh Temple, Bangalore North, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560077, have changed the name of my minor son ATHARV VINITH aged 4 years and he shall hereafter be known as ATHARV VINITH MOHAN.

**SAFE CHILDCARE FACILITY**

# *Childcare centre eases burden for working mothers*

**VIJAYAPURA**

A childcare centre started at the premises of the Vijayapura Zilla Panchayat is bringing relief to many working mothers by providing a safe place for their children during office hours. The centre, functioning under the Department of Women and Child Development, has become a helpful facility for women employees who struggle to manage both work and childcare.

In many urban families, both husband and wife are employed, making it difficult to care for young children. To solve this problem, the childcare centre was established at the Zilla Panchayat campus. The facility has been running for the past three years, and a new and improved building has now been constructed to better serve employees.

The centre is designed like a play home where children are cared for from morning to evening. It has a kitchen, playroom, resting area, learning materials and colourful wall paintings that help in language and mental development. Toys, brain-development games and creative materials are also available to support children's learning.

Children are given nutritious food such as milk, eggs, ragi porridge, rice, vegetable soup and fruits every day. A playground with swings and slides has also been arranged so children can play freely and enjoy their time at the centre.

Around 10 to 15 children visit the centre daily. A teacher and two assistants take care of them, ensuring proper food, playtime and rest.

Various activities like rhymes, storytelling and games help improve children's physical and mental development.

Chief Executive Officer Rishi Anand often visits the centre and interacts with the children. Many women employees from nearby government offices now leave their children at the centre and attend work without worry.

# CRPF SETS UP 'SHOOT HOUSE' IN KASHMIR

## It aims at enhancing the combat readiness and tactical capabilities of its personnel deployed in high-risk operational environments

**SRINAGAR**

According to a statement issued by the CRPF, the newly established facility has been designed to provide advanced training in close-quarter battle (CQB) techniques and room-entry drills, which are essential for counter-insurgency and anti-terror operations. The initiative is part of the force's ongoing efforts to modernise training methods and equip personnel with the skills required to respond effectively to evolving security challenges in the region.

The CRPF stated that the Shoot House will enable troops to sharpen their tactical skills in simulated combat environments that closely resemble real-life situations. CRPF has established a 'Shoot House' facility in Kashmir to enhance specialised combat training for its personnel. Designed for close-quarter battle and room-entry drills, the facility will help troops sharpen the tactical skills required for high-risk operations, the statement said.

Equipped with modern technology, the facility aims to ensure that CRPF personnel remain operationally elite and better prepared to tackle emerging threats. The advanced training environment allows security personnel to practise critical operations such as building clearance, coordinated team movements, and hostage-rescue scenarios.

A Shoot House, sometimes referred to as a Kill House, is a specialised, highly secure structure used by military and law enforcement agencies for live-fire training exercises. These facilities are constructed with ballistic-rated and armoured walls that ensure safety during intense training drills while preventing bullet ricochets.

Typically built using materials such as reinforced concrete, plywood, and ballistic rubber, the structures are designed to contain live ammunition safely. The layout usually includes hallways, staircases, doors, windows, and sometimes furniture to simulate real-world environments where operations may take place.

The modular design of such facilities allows rooms and walls to be reconfigured, enabling trainers to create different tactical scenarios. Features often include moving or pop-up targets, mechanical or explosive breaching doors, and the use of flashbang devices to replicate real operational conditions.

Additionally, video cameras and overhead catwalks are installed to allow instructors to monitor drills closely. This enables detailed After Action Reviews (AAR), helping personnel analyse their performance and refine tactics.

## QUICK READ

### Guj ATS seizes 9 kg more etomidate drug in export racket probe

**Ahmedabad**

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) probing an alleged international etomidate export racket have seized an additional nine kilograms of the anaesthetic drug during the probe, officials said on Wednesday. The total quantity seized in the case was 50 kilograms across India and overseas. According to officials, the fresh recoveries were made during follow-up searches conducted after investigators shared details of the case on Tuesday. During the latest action, the investigation team seized four kilograms of etomidate from the Aramex logistics hub. Officials said the consignment had been sent for air cargo shipment by accused Nikunj Gadhiya on March 2 through a firm named DSUN Chemicals and Pharma.

### NITI Aayog launches second annual edition of 'Fiscal Health Index'

**New Delhi**

The NITI Aayog on Wednesday launched the second annual edition of the Fiscal Health Index to provide a comprehensive and comparable assessment of the fiscal performance of Indian states. The Index has been designed as a data-driven framework to evaluate fiscal soundness, guide reforms, and promote evidence-based fiscal policy making across states. At a time when global public finances are under mounting pressure, the sustainability of sub-national finances has assumed increasing importance. In this context, robust fiscal management at all levels of government has become essential to maintaining macroeconomic stability and supporting long-term development, according to an official statement.

## PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana gains momentum in Udhampur

**JAMMU**

According to government estimates, more than 700 houses in Udhampur district have already installed solar panels on their rooftops under the scheme.

Many more residents have applied and are currently awaiting installation, reflecting the rising interest in renewable energy solutions that help reduce electricity costs while promoting environmental sustainability.

Officials say the initiative is not only helping households cut down on electricity bills but is also making a silent yet strong contribution towards environmental protection by encouraging the use of solar power.

Anuj Gupta, Assistant Executive Engineer at the Power Development Department (PDD) in Udhampur, said that the scheme has seen significant participation in the district. He noted that over 700 rooftop solar systems have already been installed and several more are expected to be set up in the coming months.

People who have installed solar panels are benefiting greatly. Their electricity bills have also decreased significantly after installing solar panels, Gupta said. He also urged residents to take full advantage of the scheme, which is being implemented by the Central government to promote clean energy adoption at the household level.

This is a central government scheme and people should take full advantage of it. Through this, you can significantly reduce your electricity bills and contribute to clean energy, he added.

Beneficiaries of the scheme have also shared positive experiences after installing solar panels. Satish Khajuria, a resident who availed of the scheme, said the financial assistance provided by the government has made solar energy more accessible for ordinary households.

We installed solar panels under the PM Surya Ghar Yojana. It has many benefits. We can finance it for around ₹10,000, while the total cost is around ₹2 lakh. The government provides a subsidy of around ₹85,000 to ₹90,000, he said.

Khajuria added that the electricity generated by the panels is fed directly into the power grid, which significantly reduces monthly electricity bills. Ever since I installed these solar panels, our electricity bill has not exceeded ₹150, he said.

## Centre should ensure uninterrupted LPG, fuel supply: Punjab Min

**CHANDIGARH**

Punjab Food and Civil Supplies Minister Lal Chand Kataruchak on Wednesday urged the Centre to ensure uninterrupted supplies of essential fuels amid rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia. Chairing a meeting with representatives of major public sector oil companies — Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) — the minister stressed the need for coordinated efforts to maintain steady supplies and prevent panic among the public.

Kataruchak said the ongoing conflict in West Asia could potentially disrupt the availability of petroleum products and cooking gas. He urged the Union government to remain proactive and ensure that citizens do not face shortages of LPG, petrol and diesel. The minister also called upon the high-powered committee constituted by the Centre to remain vigilant and take timely measures to maintain adequate supplies of essential commodities across the country. He said the committee must act swiftly to prevent public panic arising from the volatile global situation.

Kataruchak further directed senior officers of the Food and Civil Supplies Department to closely monitor the situation at the district level and hold meetings with Deputy Commissioners, District Food Supply Controllers and representatives of gas companies to ensure smooth distribution.

## Guj orders 34 trainsets for Ahmedabad, Surat metro projects

**AHMEDABAD**

The Gujarat government has placed an order for 34 metro train sets to strengthen urban transport systems in the state, with 10 sets allocated for the Ahmedabad Metro Phase-2 project and 24 for the upcoming Surat Metro. Officials said the train sets are being manufactured at Titagarh's production facility in Kolkata.

The procurement is part of the state government's broader efforts to improve public transport infrastructure and enhance urban mobility. Authorities also noted that domestic manufacturing of the train sets will support employment generation and skill development in the sector while reducing reliance on imports.

The additional 10 train sets for Ahmedabad Metro Phase-2 will primarily operate on the Ahmedabad–Gandhinagar corridor. At present, a 68.2-kilometre metro network is operational across the twin cities, serving as a key transport option for daily commuters. Currently, 32 train sets are running on the corridor, and the addition of new sets is expected to increase service frequency, reduce passenger waiting times and improve capacity. Metro services in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar were conceptualised during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat. Since then, Phase-1 and Phase-2 of the Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project have been implemented under the current state government led by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.

Meanwhile, work on the 40.3-kilometre Surat Metro project is progressing steadily. The 24 new train sets ordered for Surat will be deployed once the system becomes operational, providing a modern and sustainable transport alternative for the city's growing population.

## 'Cong MLA must apologise for offensive language against women'

**CHANDIGARH**

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Cheema on Wednesday condemned Congress legislator Sukhpal Khaira for derogatory remarks he made on social media, demanding an immediate and unconditional apology. The minister also appealed to the Speaker of the Vidhan Sabha to initiate strict disciplinary action if Khaira failed to apologise publicly for his offensive and unparliamentary language.

Addressing the House, Cheema said, Sukhpal Singh Khaira made offensive comments directed at the women of Punjab and subsequently launched a severe personal attack on me, referring to me as a 'bandua mazdoor' when I stood up to object to his remarks. Such language is completely unacceptable and unbecoming of a legislator.

Taking the matter further while addressing the media outside the House, the minister demanded that Congress should tender an official apology because its members used these derogatory words towards the labour community and women.

He stressed the party leadership must take responsibility for the shameful conduct of their representative. Taking a firm stand against the incident, the minister urged the Speaker to act decisively.

I have appealed to the Speaker of the House to take strict disciplinary action. If Sukhpal Singh Khaira does not issue a prompt and public apology for his highly offensive and unparliamentary language, his membership in the legislative assembly should be cancelled, he said.

Expressing anguish over the personal attack on his humble background, Cheema reminded the House of the dignity of labour and the proud legacy of the working classes.

I ask the members of this House, particularly those from the Congress, to reflect on their own lineage. The ancestors of many elected representatives proudly came from working-class families. Would any of them accept being labelled as 'bandua mazdoor'? Such language insults not only an individual but the dignity of the hardworking people of Punjab, he said. Rising above personal remarks, the minister underlined his pride in the country's democratic foundations and the empowerment provided by the Constitution of India.

## Bihar AIMIM chief meets Tejashwi, holds talks ahead of RS polls

**PATNA**

Political activity in Bihar has intensified ahead of the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections after Akhtarul Iman, the state president of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), met Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav at his official residence in Patna on Wednesday. The unexpected meeting has sparked speculation about possible political coordination between AIMIM and the RJD amid the numbers game in the Rajya Sabha elections.

According to sources, the two leaders held a lengthy closed-door discussion focusing on vote dynamics in the Bihar Assembly and possible political strategies for the Rajya Sabha polls.

With several seats up for election, each MLA's vote has become crucial, and smaller parties could play a decisive role in determining the outcome. AIMIM currently has five MLAs in the Bihar Assembly, and political observers believe that its legislators could become important in the election arithmetic.

Akhtarul Iman's visit to Tejashwi Yadav is being viewed by many analysts as an attempt to explore a political understanding that could influence the Rajya Sabha outcome.

Relations between the RJD and AIMIM have often been strained in the past. The RJD has previously accused AIMIM of acting as a B-team of its rivals, while AIMIM leaders have alleged that the RJD failed to adequately represent Muslim interests.

However, the latest meeting suggests that both parties may be willing to set aside their differences in order to counter the ruling alliance. Political analysts say the discussion may not be limited to the Rajya Sabha election alone. There are indications that the leaders may also be exploring cooperation for future political battles, including the upcoming Lok Sabha and Bihar Assembly elections in 2029 and 2030, respectively.

If coordination emerges between AIMIM and the opposition alliance in the Seemanchal region, it could pose a significant electoral challenge to the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Bihar.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT
ATALJI JANASNEHI DIRECTORATE
SSLR BUILDING, K.R.CIRCLE, BENGALURU-560001
No: AJSD/Tender/E-2087305/2025-26 Date: 11/03/2026
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
Tenders are invited from reputed firms for procurement of **311 UPS/INVERTER AND BATTERY UNITS** to Atalji Janasnehi Kendras, Revenue Department, Bangalore. e-Tender No: **AJSD/2025-26/IND0008.** The Tender documents and related information can be obtained from e-Procurement portal - **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** from **12-03-2026.**
Sd/- Additional Director,
Atalji Janasnehi Directorate, Bengaluru.
DIPR/CP/SMCL /6194/25-26

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ
ಸಹಾಯಕ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ
ಉಪ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಸಹಾಯಕರು,
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ಅರಣ್ಯ ಭವನ, ಅಶೋಕಪುರಂ ಮೈಸೂರು–570008
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:ಸಅಸಂ/ಬಿ1/ಬಿಯುಡಿ/ಟೆಂಡರ್/ಸಿಆರ್–19/2025–26 ದಿ: 07.03.2026
ಸಂಕ್ಷಿಪ್ತ ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ (ಇ–ಪ್ರಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ವೇದಿಕೆ)
2026–27ನೇ ಸಾಲಿಗೆ ಮೈಸೂರು ವಿಭಾಗದ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊರಗುತ್ತಿಗೆ ನೌಕರರನ್ನು ಒದಗಿಸುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಡಾಟಾ ಎಂಟ್ರಿ ಆಪರೇಟರ್, ವಾಹನ ಚಾಲಕರು, ಕಾವಲುಗಾರರು, ಕಛೇರಿ ಸೇವಕರು, ಹಾಗೂ ಕಳ್ಳಬೇಟೆ ತಡೆ ಶಿಬಿರಗಳಿಗೆ (ಎಪಿಸಿ) ಕಾವಲುಗಾರರ ಸೇವೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಈ ವಿಭಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ ನೊಂದಾಯಿಸಿರುವ ಅರ್ಹ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರಿಂದ ಹಾಗೂ ವಿವಿಧ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳ ಮೂಲಕ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನಗೊಳಿಸಲು ಇ–ಪ್ರಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ವೇದಿಕೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಿದ್ದು, ವಿವರ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡಂತಿರುತ್ತದೆ. 1) ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರು https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in ಅಂತರ್ಜಾಲದ ಮೂಲಕ ಟೆಂಡರಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಬಹುದು. 2) ಒಟ್ಟು ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಿಟ್ಟಿರುವ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ–52 3) ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಷರತ್ತುಗಳ ಕುರಿತಾದ ಸ್ಪಷ್ಟೀಕರಣ ಕೇಳಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿ: 23.03.2026 ಅಪರಾಹ್ನ 11.00 ಘಂಟೆವರೆಗೆ. 4) ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರು ಅಂತರ್ಜಾಲದ ಮೂಲಕ ಇ–ಪ್ರಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ವೇದಿಕೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಮತ್ತು ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ಡುಗಳನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿ: 23.03.2026 ಸಂಜೆ 16.00 ಘಂಟೆವರೆಗೆ. 5) ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ಡುಗಳನ್ನು ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿ: 24.03.2026 ಸಂಜೆ 16.00 ಘಂಟೆ ನಂತರ. 6) ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ಡುಗಳನ್ನು ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿ: 25.03.2026 ಮಧ್ಯಾಹ್ನ 16.00 ಘಂಟೆ. 7) ಮೇಲ್ಕಂಡ ದಿನಾಂಕಗಳಂದು ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಬಾರದ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸದರಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ ಷರತ್ತುಗಳಿಗೆ ಒಳಪಟ್ಟು 8) ಮರುಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿ: 30.03.2026 ಸಂಜೆ 16.00 ಘಂಟೆವರೆಗೆ. 9) ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ಡುಗಳನ್ನು ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿ: 01.04.2026 ಸಂಜೆ 16.00 ಘಂಟೆ ನಂತರ. 10) ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ಡುಗಳನ್ನು ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿ: 02.04.2026 ಸಂಜೆ 16.00 ಘಂಟೆ. 11) ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿವರಗಳಿಗಾಗಿ https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in ಅಂತರ್ಜಾಲ ಅಥವಾ ಈ ಕಛೇರಿಯ ದೂರವಾಣಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 0821–2483853ನ್ನು ಕೆಲಸದ ದಿನಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸುವುದು. 12) ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಯಾವುದೇ ತಿದ್ದುಪಡಿ, ಮಾರ್ಪಾಡು ಅಥವಾ ಇತರ ಬದಲಾವಣೆಗಳಿದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಚಾರಪಡಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು.
ಸಹಿ/– ಸಹಾಯಕ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾಧಿಕಾರಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಉಪ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಸಹಾಯಕರು,
ಮೈಸೂರು ಉಪ ವಿಭಾಗ, ಮೈಸೂರು
DIPR/DDMYS/1817/KSMCA/1023/2025-26

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

BENGALURU SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT LIMITED
Office of the Deputy General Manager-2, BBMP Building, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru – 560 051.
No: DGM-2/BSWML/Qtn/11/2025-26 DATE: 11.03.2026
INVITATION FOR QUOTATION (IFQ)
(Short term Notification)
The Deputy General Manger-2 invites Item Rate Quotation for the work details in the table given below. The bidder may submit quotation for the work given in the table. Bidder may get information of schedule of quantities from office of Assistant General Manager, K.R.Puram Division Bangalore Solid Waste Management Limited Bangalore. Bidder must be Submit quotation in the form of post physically to office of Assistant General Manager, K.R.Puram Division, Solid Waste Management Limited, Bangalore within the date and time published. Quotations will be opened at prescribed time and date, in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend at the OFFICE OF THE Assistant General Manager, K.R.Puram Division Bangalore Solid Waste Management Limited, Bangalore–560036.

| Sl. No. | Name of the works | Approx. Value of Work (Rs.in Lakh) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Providing & Fixing CCTV Cameras & Fire Extinguishers at Subbarayanapalya SWM Processing Plant. | |

**Calendar of Events:** 1. Submission of quotation **13.03.2026** onwards. 2. Last date submission of quotations on or before **24.03.2026 at, 4.00 PM.** 3. Date of opening of quotations on **25.03.2026 at 11.00 AM onwards**. 4. Before submission of quotations, bidders must ensure that all the necessary documents have been attached with quotation.
DIPR/CP/6192/NR/2025-26 Sd/- Deputy General Manager-2, BSWML

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS,
TIPTUR SUB DIVISION (TERRITORIAL)DIVISION
Vidya Nagar, Opp Kalpataru College, B.H. Road,
TIPTUR – 572 201 Email: acftipaturu@gmail.com
No:ACF/TSD/KMERC/E-TENDER/CR-27/2025-26
DATE: 03.03.2026
E-Tender Notification
E-Tender is invited by the Forest Department, Tiptur Sub-Division, Tumkur Territorial Division pertaining to different ranges under CEPMIZ (KMERC) Scheme for the year 2025-26 for Various works for the year 2025-26. The Bidders need to be Registered as Contractor/Forest Contractor during 2025-26 can participate for the following works.
Total Number works 13, Highest value of the work Rs.22891472/-. Highest value of the EMD Rs.343372/-, Lowest Value of the Work Rs.10914200/-, Lowest Value of the EMD Rs.200000/-, Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: 04-04-2026 at 3:00 PM. Technical Bid Opening Date : 06-04-2026 at 3:00 PM. Price Bid Opening Date : 07-04-2026 at 3:00 PM. Last date for Bid Enquiry: 27-03-2025 at 3:00 PM. For more information about this tender may contact our office at office timings and more details on https://kppp. karnataka.gov.in
Sd/-Assistant Conservator of Forests,
Tiptur Sub Division, Tiptur
DIPR/TUM/484/KSMCA/2025-26

## QUICK READ

### 'Tense': Congress raises concerns over global energy crisis

**New Delhi**

The Congress on Wednesday expressed concern over the evolving global energy situation, describing it as tense and urging the government to address the issue more transparently. Party leaders said the developments in the international energy market and the domestic situation related to LPG cylinders and fuel supply require serious attention and discussion at the national level.

Speaking to reporters outside Parliament, Congress MP Manish Tewari highlighted the impact of the geopolitical situation on global energy supplies, particularly the disruption around the Strait of Hormuz. The global energy situation is tense due to the blockage of the Strait of Hormuz. As of yesterday, only one ship passed through the strait, which handles nearly 40 per cent of global energy supplies moving from West Asia to the East.

### T'gana Assembly Speaker's ruling a 'mockery of Constitution': BJP

**Hyderabad**

The BJP in Telangana has termed as mockery of the Constitution the judgment of Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, dismissing petitions for disqualification of BRS MLAs who had defected to ruling Congress party. State BJP president, N. Ramchander Rao, called Wednesday's verdict by the Speaker on the petitions for disqualification of Danam Nagender and Kadiyam Srihari as absolute mockery of the Constitution. In his post on 'X', Ramchander Rao took potshots at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. The ruling delivered today by the Telangana Speaker in the MLA defection case is a striking example of the kind of respect for the Constitution that RG often claims to champion, wrote the BJP chief.

### Modi govt's 'feeble' foreign policy to blame for LPG crisis: Kejri

**New Delhi**

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said that the country is going through troubling times due to acute LPG shortage, which is only going to worsen with the deepening West Asia crisis, and pinned the blame on the Narendra Modi government's feeble and pliable foreign policy. Addressing a press conference in the capital, Kejriwal claimed that the nation's LPG production has reduced by about 50 per cent, and its fallout is visible primarily in the commercial sector as multiple restaurants are pulling their shutters down.

# Jharkhand HC orders CBI probe into FIR against ED officials

The HC directed the CBI to investigate the FIR registered against officials of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) by the Jharkhand police

**RANCHI**

Delivering a reserved judgment, Justice Sanjay Kumar Dwivedi ordered that the entire matter related to the FIR lodged against ED officials be handed over to the CBI for a detailed probe.

The decision came after the court heard extensive arguments from all parties involved in the case.

The ruling is being viewed as a significant setback for the Jharkhand state government and the Ranchi police, who had earlier registered the FIR and initiated action against ED officers. The Enforcement Directorate had challenged the FIR, calling it baseless and politically motivated. The central agency had also approached the High Court seeking to quash the FIR and requested that the case be investigated by the CBI to ensure an impartial inquiry.

The controversy began earlier this year when Santosh Kumar, an employee of the state's Drinking Water and Sanitation Department, lodged a complaint against ED officials. Kumar, who is also an accused in a money laundering case being investigated by the ED, alleged that he was assaulted, verbally abused and mentally harassed during interrogation at the ED office in Ranchi on January 12.

Following the complaint, the Ranchi Airport police station registered an FIR against several ED officers. In a dramatic turn of events, the Ranchi police also conducted a raid at the ED's Ranchi office as part of their investigation. The move sparked a sharp confrontation between the state police and the central investigation agency, raising questions about jurisdiction and the conduct of investigative authorities.

The ED strongly denied the allegations and maintained that its officers were carrying out lawful interrogation as part of an ongoing money laundering investigation. The agency argued that the FIR was an attempt to obstruct its probe and intimidate its officials.

With the High Court now ordering a CBI investigation, the central agency is expected to examine the circumstances surrounding the FIR, the allegations made by Santosh Kumar, and the subsequent actions taken by the Ranchi police.

# KTR slams Speaker for clean chit to turncoat MLAs

**BRS leader calls decision on Danam Nagender and Kadiyam Srihari a "dark day for democracy"**

**HYDERABAD**

Reacting sharply on social media platform X, Rama Rao took exception to Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar's decision to dismiss petitions seeking the disqualification of MLAs Danam Nagender and Kadiyam Srihari under the anti-defection law.

Both leaders were elected to the Telangana Legislative Assembly in the 2023 elections on BRS tickets but later shifted their allegiance to the ruling Congress party.

The BRS leader alleged that the Speaker's decision disregarded the mandate given by the people and encouraged political defections. Rama Rao particularly criticised the decision regarding Danam Nagender, who later contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections on the Congress party's symbol after leaving the BRS.

This is not a judgment. This is an example of how the constitutional system is used to favour those in power, Rama Rao said in his post. He questioned how democratic values could survive if elected representatives change political loyalties for personal gain while retaining their positions with the approval of constitutional authorities.

He further stated that such decisions erode the trust of the public in democratic institutions. According to him, allowing elected representatives to defect without facing consequences sends a dangerous signal in a parliamentary democracy.

The people of Telangana are watching everything. They will give the answer at the right time, he added, suggesting that voters would respond politically to such developments in future elections.

Meanwhile, Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, while pronouncing the orders on the petitions, said that the petitioners had failed to provide sufficient evidence proving that the two MLAs had officially defected to the Congress party. On this basis, the Speaker dismissed the disqualification pleas.

The petitions seeking disqualification were filed by BRS MLA Kaushik Reddy and BJP MLA Maheshwar Reddy against Danam Nagender, while BRS MLA K. P. Vivekanand had filed a separate petition against Kadiyam Srihari. The Speaker had completed hearings on the petitions last week before delivering his ruling.

*The Lok Sabha witnessed heated exchanges and noisy scenes on Wednesday after BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad criticised Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi over his conduct in Parliament and remarks made during foreign visits*

# Prasad slams Oppn in, calls out LoP's conduct

**NEW DELHI**

The confrontation unfolded during a debate in the Lok Sabha when Ravi Shankar Prasad took a swipe at Rahul Gandhi while speaking about the responsibilities associated with the post of Leader of Opposition (LoP). The BJP leader questioned Gandhi's conduct both inside Parliament and during his interactions abroad, suggesting that he needed guidance on how to perform the role effectively.

Referring to senior Congress leader K.C. Venugopal, Prasad remarked that the Congress MP should teach Rahul Gandhi about the proper conduct expected from the Leader of Opposition in the House.

Venugopal ji should teach something to Rahul Gandhi about the conduct of the LoP, he said, prompting strong objections from Opposition benches.

Prasad also criticised Gandhi for referring to what he described as an unpublished memoir of a former Army Chief during a previous discussion in Parliament. The remark triggered loud protests from Opposition members, who raised slogans and objected to the BJP leader's comments. The House briefly witnessed chaotic scenes as MPs from both sides exchanged sharp remarks.

Amid the uproar, Rahul Gandhi stood up to respond and defended his statements, asserting that the debate in Parliament was about democratic principles and the functioning of the House.

The discussion here is about the democratic process and the role of the Speaker. Multiple times my name has been raised, and wild things have been said about me, Gandhi said.

He emphasised that Parliament represents the collective voice of the people of India rather than the interests of a single party. This House is the expression of the people of India. It does not represent one party, but the whole country. Every time we get up to speak, we are stopped from speaking, he said.

# PIL filed in Calcutta HC for violence-free polls in West Bengal

**KOLKATA**

A public interest litigation had been filed at a division bench of the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday seeking free and fair and violence-free polls in West Bengal in the crucial Assembly elections in the state scheduled later this year.

The petition had been admitted by the division bench of the Calcutta High Court, Chief Justice Sujoy Paul and Justice Partha Sarathi Sen, and the matter is expected to come up for hearing in the second half of Wednesday.

The publication interest litigation had been filed just a day after the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) told media persons in Kolkata on Tuesday that the Election Commission of India (ECI) this time will move with a zero-tolerance policy towards poll-related violence, be it before the polls, during the polls, or after the polls.

The Commission had decided to act in this matter very strongly and take strong action against anyone involved in the matter, the CEC said.

In the public interest litigation filed on Wednesday, the petition referred to instances of poll-related violence in the past election, including intimidation of voters and opposition party agents, and even instances of outrage of modesty of women by the political hooligans in the state.

The other demands in the public interest litigation include immediate deployment of central armed police forces (CAPF) in highly sensitive pockets in the state, installation of CCTVs, and arrangement of videography in all booths this time.

The petitioner had also referred to unprecedented bloodshed and violence in the elections for the three-tier panchayat system in West Bengal both in 2018 and 2023, which resulted in loss of several lives in both these years.

# Bihar police warns against hoarding petrol, LPG

**PATNA**

As fears of shortage of LPG and petroleum products triggered panic buying across Bihar, the Bihar Police stepped in to manage the situation and issued an alert directing authorities to prevent chaos and hoarding.

Although the government has stated that LPG stocks are sufficient and there is no need to panic, anxiety remains high among residents.

According to officials, the Special Branch of the Bihar Police issued an alert letter directing authorities to increase police patrols around petrol pumps and LPG agencies to prevent chaos and hoarding.

The directive was sent to Divisional Commissioners, Range IGs/DIGs, District Magistrates, and district police chiefs across the state.

The letter warned that tensions in West Asia, particularly involving Iran and the United States, could impact the supply of petroleum products, potentially causing panic buying. Authorities were asked to remain vigilant against crowds, hoarding, and black marketing and to ensure law and order near fuel distribution points.

Bihar usually receives around 2.5 lakh LPG cylinders daily, including domestic and commercial cylinders supplied to homes, hotels, restaurants, schools, and hostels. However, gas agencies claim that fresh supplies have not reached many areas for the past three days, meaning that only existing stock is currently being distributed.

In several districts, booking of commercial LPG cylinders has been temporarily stopped, while domestic consumers are waiting for hours to obtain cylinders.

Long lines have been reported outside gas agencies in multiple districts, including Gopalganj, Bhojpur, Darbhanga, Araria, West Champaran, Purnea, Supaul and other districts.

Consumers, including women and elderly residents, have been seen standing in queues from early morning, with many returning home empty-handed.

### Kerala CM urges Centre to ensure LPG supply, price relief

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday urged the Centre to ensure adequate LPG supply and provide relief from rising cooking gas prices. He said increasing costs and reports of LPG shortages in parts of Kerala are placing a heavy burden on ordinary households. Vijayan also highlighted that the 27-day booking restriction for domestic cylinders makes timely refills difficult. He warned that disruptions could affect hotels and restaurants that serve migrant workers and travellers. With LPG demand expected to rise during Ramzan, the Chief Minister called for immediate Central intervention to stabilize supply and ease price pressures.

### PM Modi courts fishers at 'Dheevara Sabha' celebrations

**KOCHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday praised Kerala's fisher community while addressing the golden jubilee celebrations of the Kerala Dheevara Sabha in Kochi, highlighting the Centre's initiatives to strengthen the fisheries sector. Speaking at the event marking the organisation's 50th anniversary, Modi described it as a historic milestone for a body that has worked for the uplift of fisher folk. Responding to Sabha president V. Dinakaran's remarks that the Prime Minister had come to bless the community, Modi said he had instead come to seek their blessings. Dinakaran, a former Congress MLA who joined the BJP last year, leads the organisation representing a large section of Kerala's fishing community. The Kerala Dheevara Sabha represents around 2.5 million fisher folk across the state and has influence in about 45 Assembly constituencies. Modi praised the community for protecting coastal resources and traditions and recalled their heroic role in rescuing people during Kerala's devastating floods.

**EYES ON GLOBAL MARKET**

# *APEDA showcases India's agri-food export strength at AAHAR 2026*

**NEW DELHI**

APEDA showcased India's growing capabilities in high-quality agricultural production, value addition and export-oriented supply chains at the 'AAHAR 2026'.

The pavilion brought together exporters, startups, State agencies and producer organisations, highlighting opportunities to expand India's presence in international markets, it was announced on Wednesday.

The 40th edition of AAHAR 2026 inaugurated by the minister is being held from March 10 to March 14 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

APEDA presented a dedicated pavilion bringing together exporters, state representatives and industry stakeholders on a common platform to promote India's diverse agri-export basket.

Organised by the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), the landmark edition of the event features Italy as the country partner, the government said.

Exports of processed foods, fruits, pulses and vegetables have grown significantly over the past decade, reflecting the strength and diversity of farmers, fishermen and food processors across the country.

India's expanding network of free trade agreements is opening new avenues for agricultural exports, according to the government.

During the event, research reports on cucumber, cashew, pineapple and pomegranate, prepared by APEDA in collaboration with the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), were also released.

APEDA further announced the launch of packaging design solutions and technical standards for selected region-specific agricultural products developed with the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP). The initiative focuses on GI-tagged and organic products to enhance product protection, shelf life and export presentation.

The products covered under the initiative include Karbi Anglong Ginger from Assam, G4 Chilli and Jalgaon Banana from Maharashtra, Assam Kaji Nemu and Prayagraj Surkha Guava from Uttar Pradesh. According to the government, major export segments showcased at the pavilion included basmati rice, non-basmati rice, organic products and emerging plant-based foods, reflecting India's expanding portfolio in global agri-food markets.

# IRAN FIRES FRESH MISSILE BARRAGE ACROSS REGION, ISRAEL STRIKES BACK

Iran launched fresh missile and drone attacks on Israel and multiple targets across the Middle East, escalating tensions.

**TEHRAN**

The renewed Iranian strikes underline the widening scope of the conflict that began nearly two weeks ago when the United States and Israel launched coordinated military operations targeting key Iranian facilities. According to reports, the latest developments also threaten global energy security, as the strategic Strait of Hormuz remains effectively blocked.

The Gulf waterway, through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil supply normally passes, has seen shipping severely disrupted. Vessels have been unable to move safely through the narrow channel along Iran's coastline, creating the most serious interruption to global energy supplies since the oil shocks of the 1970s. The attacks on ships in the Gulf have further heightened concerns among international shipping companies and energy markets.

Despite the intensifying military confrontation, financial markets showed signs of temporary stabilization. Oil

prices, which had surged earlier this week amid fears of supply disruptions, eased slightly, while stock markets rebounded. Investors appear to be betting that U.S. President Donald Trump may seek a swift diplomatic or military resolution to the conflict.

However, developments on the ground suggest the fighting is far from over. The Pentagon described Tuesday's strikes on Iranian targets as the most intensive operations carried out during the war so far. The attacks reportedly targeted multiple military and strategic facilities across Iran.

Tensions escalated further after offices of an Iranian bank were struck overnight during the bombardment. In response, Iranian authorities warned that they would expand their retaliation to include U.S. and Israeli banking targets throughout the Middle East.

With both sides continuing military operations and the Strait of Hormuz still effectively blocked, global markets and governments remain on high alert, fearing a prolonged conflict that could severely disrupt energy supplies and regional stability.

## Drone strikes near Dubai airport deepen Gulf aviation chaos

**DUBAI**

Authorities reported that the drones landed close to Dubai International Airport (DXB), the world's busiest airport for international passengers. While no immediate damage or casualties were reported, the incident heightened concerns over aviation safety across the Gulf region as missile and drone threats continue to disrupt normal operations.

At the same time, Bahrain moved several aircraft away from vulnerable areas of its airport facilities as a precautionary measure amid ongoing attacks on infrastructure across the Gulf. The developments underscore the escalating risks to civil aviation as the conflict intensifies.

The war involving the United States, Israel and Iran has triggered widespread disruption to global flight operations. Tens of thousands of flights have been cancelled, rerouted or delayed as airlines avoid flying through large sections of Middle Eastern airspace.

Two drones fell near Dubai's main international airport on Wednesday, while Bahrain evacuated some aircraft as a precaution.

Several countries have temporarily closed or restricted their airspace, including Qatar, forcing airlines to adopt longer alternative routes. Aviation experts say the situation has pushed the industry into its most severe crisis since the COVID-19 pandemic, with airlines struggling to maintain schedules and manage operational costs.

Dubai International Airport serves as a major global transit hub connecting Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. Any disruption at the airport can have far-reaching consequences for international travel. Other regional airports that act as key stopover points for long-haul journeys have also experienced significant operational challenges.

The conflict has additionally disrupted one of the world's most important oil export corridors, causing jet fuel prices to rise sharply. Higher fuel costs have already started pushing up airfares on some routes, adding further pressure on airlines and travellers.

Beyond passenger travel, the aviation disruption is also affecting global supply chains. Time-sensitive cargo shipments transported by air have been heavily impacted, with delays and rerouting complicating logistics for businesses relying on fast deliveries.

As the conflict continues with no immediate sign of de-escalation, airlines and aviation authorities remain on high alert while attempting to gradually restore safe flight operations across the region.

## White South Africans returning home from US amid safety concerns

**WESTERN CAPE**

Andrew Veitch, a 53-year-old who moved from South Africa to California in 2003, says his decision to leave the United States was influenced by growing fears about gun violence and recent incidents involving immigration enforcement officers.

Veitch recalled that although he once left South Africa after being held up at gunpoint in his car, he now believes the risks in the United States have become more alarming.

"People are being shot in broad daylight. American citizens are being shot and killed," Veitch said, explaining why he no longer feels safe living in the country.

His concerns also stem from a controversial incident in January in which U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers shot and killed two American citizens. Officials in President Donald Trump's administration said the officers were justified in using force, although video evidence later emerged that appeared to contradict their version of events.

Veitch now plans to return to South Africa later this year, joining what analysts describe

as a growing number of white South Africans who are moving back despite earlier migration trends that saw many relocate abroad.

The development comes amid political debate surrounding the status of white South Africans. President Trump has previously claimed that the white minority in South Africa faces persecution from the country's Black majority government. However, South African authorities strongly dispute that assertion.

The government in Pretoria maintains that there is no credible evidence showing discrimination or persecution targeting white citizens. Officials argue that South Africa's constitution guarantees equal rights and protections for all groups.

Since the end of apartheid and white minority rule in 1994, many white South Africans emigrated to countries such as the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. Some cited concerns about crime, economic opportunities and employment prospects as reasons for leaving.

However, recent years have also seen a portion of that diaspora returning to South Africa, often citing family ties, economic considerations or dissatisfaction with life abroad.

Observers say the shifting migration patterns reflect complex personal and social factors rather than a single political cause, as individuals weigh safety, economic prospects and quality of life when deciding where to live.

## 6 dead in Swiz bus fire as cops probe 'self-immolation' angle

**KERZERS**

The tragic incident occurred in the town of Kerzers, located in the western canton of Fribourg, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the Swiss capital Bern.

According to police, the bus was travelling along a local road when it suddenly became engulfed in flames, leading to panic among passengers on board.

Emergency services rushed to the scene after reports of the fire, but by the time firefighters managed to extinguish the blaze, the vehicle had been severely damaged. Authorities confirmed that six people lost their lives in the incident, while three others sustained injuries and were taken to nearby hospitals for treatment.

Fribourg police spokesperson Frederic Papaux said early findings suggest the fire may have been deliberately triggered by someone inside the bus. "At this stage, we have elements suggesting a deliberate act by a person who was inside the bus," Papaux stated.

Investigators are currently examining reports that an individual may have poured fuel on themselves before igniting it, which could have caused the fire to spread rapidly through the vehicle. Christa Bielmann, another spokesperson for the Fribourg police, told a press conference that the investigation was still at an early stage and authorities were working to determine the exact circumstances behind the tragedy.

Officials stressed that there is currently no evidence indicating the incident was linked to terrorism. Romain Collaud, a local politician in Fribourg, also told Swiss-French broadcaster RTS that authorities have not found any signs pointing to a terrorist attack.

In addition to the three injured passengers who were hospitalised, two other people received medical attention at the scene but did not require hospital treatment.

Witnesses described chaotic scenes as passengers attempted to escape the burning bus, some appearing panicked and injured while fleeing the vehicle. Footage captured after the fire was extinguished showed the charred remains of the yellow bus, highlighting the severity of the blaze.

## Foreign hacker breached FBI server linked to Epstein probe: Report

**WASHINGTON**

Details about the breach, including the alleged involvement of a foreign hacker, have surfaced publicly for the first time.

According to the source, the cyber intrusion targeted a server located at the FBI's New York Field Office that contained files related to the investigation into Epstein, whose case has drawn worldwide attention due to his connections with influential figures across politics, finance, academia and business.

The FBI confirmed that a cyber incident had taken place but described it as limited in scope. In an official statement, the bureau said the breach was an "isolated" event and that corrective actions were taken swiftly after it was detected.

"The FBI restricted access to the malicious actor and rectified the network," the agency said, adding that the investigation into the breach remains ongoing. Officials did not provide additional details about the hacker's identity or the full extent of the data accessed.

While the source indicated that the intrusion appeared to have been carried out by a cybercriminal rather than a foreign government, the breach has raised concerns among experts about the intelligence value of the Epstein-related files. Analysts say documents connected to Epstein's network could contain information of significant interest to criminal organizations, intelligence services and investigative authorities worldwide.

The case of Jeffrey Epstein has continued to attract global scrutiny since his death in 2019 while awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charges. Over the years, legally mandated releases of U.S. Justice Department documents have revealed Epstein's associations with numerous high-profile individuals from various sectors, prompting investigations and legal inquiries in several countries.

Experts note that the cyber breach highlights the sensitive nature of the information held by law enforcement agencies and the potential risks posed by sophisticated cyberattacks targeting investigative records.

## QUICK READ

### Israeli strike hits Beirut apt block as conflict with Hezbollah escalates

**Beirut**

The strike targeted a residential building in central Beirut, raising concerns about the widening scope of Israel's military campaign in Lebanon. Until now, most Israeli attacks in the capital had been concentrated in the southern suburbs, areas widely considered strongholds of the Iran-backed Hezbollah movement. Lebanese officials said emergency teams rushed to the scene following the strike, though details regarding casualties and damage were still emerging. The attack has intensified fears among residents that the conflict is spreading deeper into densely populated areas of the city. Israel launched its offensive against Hezbollah after the group fired rockets on March 2. Hezbollah said the attack was carried out in retaliation for the killing of Iran's supreme leader at the start of the ongoing U.S.-Israeli war against Iran.

### Kremlin accuses British specialists of role in Ukrainian missile strike

**Bryansk**

The accusation comes after a deadly attack on Bryansk, a Russian region bordering Ukraine, which authorities say resulted in significant civilian casualties. According to the Bryansk regional governor, the strike carried out on Tuesday killed at least six civilians and left 37 others injured. The governor described the incident as a "terrorist missile attack," though he did not specify the exact target that was hit. The attack has further heightened tensions between Russia and Western nations supporting Ukraine in its ongoing war with Moscow. Ukrainian officials, however, offered a different account of the strike. Kyiv said its forces had targeted a key industrial facility involved in producing components for missiles used by the Russian military.

### 20 crew rescued after Thai ship hit by projectiles in Strait of Hormuz

**Bangkok**

According to Thailand's Transport Ministry, the attack occurred as the vessel sailed through the Strait of Hormuz, a key global shipping route. Unidentified projectiles struck the ship, causing an explosion at the stern and a fire in the engine room. Three crew members working there are missing after the remaining crew abandoned the vessel.

## SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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| 6 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 |
| 1 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 6 |

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

**Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.**

ITALY JUDICIAL REFORM

## *Meloni bets on a lottery to curb Italy's judicial clans*

**ROME**

The reform, scheduled to be decided in a nationwide referendum on March 22–23, seeks to reduce the influence of political factions within Italy's judicial system by selecting magistrate members of judicial governing bodies through random selection rather than internal elections.

The concept of sortition, or selecting officials by lottery, has historical roots in Italy. In ancient Rome, officials sometimes used the casting of lots to determine who would govern distant provinces. During the Renaissance period, the city-state of Florence adopted similar methods, drawing names from bags to prevent powerful families from dominating political power.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's conservative government argues that reintroducing this system could help

**IN SHORT**

- PM Meloni pitches 'sortition' to break judicial factions
- Referendum on March 22–23 puts reform to the test
- Palamara scandal still shapes battle lines

restore impartiality and reduce factionalism within Italy's judiciary, which has long been criticised for internal divisions and political influences.

However, the proposal has drawn strong opposition from many judges and prosecutors, as well as from major centre-left political parties. Critics argue that the reform could weaken judicial independence and undermine the professional merit-based system used to appoint members to important legal councils.

Recent opinion polls suggest the "no" campaign may have gained a slight lead ahead of the referendum, raising doubts about the future of one of Meloni's most prominent reform initiatives.

The reform effort also carries political significance because it revives a long-standing campaign championed by former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi before his death in 2023. Berlusconi, who faced numerous legal cases related largely to his media empire after entering politics, frequently accused Italy's judiciary of being politically biased and dominated by left-leaning factions.

# Jannik Sinner edges Fonseca to reach Indian Wells quarter-finals

Italian star survives two tight tiebreaks to overcome Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca

**INDIAN WELLS**

World No.2 Jannik Sinner delivered a composed performance to defeat Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca and advance to the quarter-finals of the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells Tennis Garden in California.

The four-time Grand Slam champion secured a hard-fought 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) victory in their first-ever meeting, overcoming a spirited challenge from the 19-year-old rising star in front of a lively crowd that included a strong Brazilian presence.

Fonseca matched the Italian shot for shot during a tense opening set, displaying powerful groundstrokes and aggressive play. Despite earning a break opportunity, the youngster could not convert it, while Sinner also squandered two chances to gain an early advantage.

The set ultimately headed to a tiebreaker where Fonseca surged to a 6-3 lead. However, Sinner responded with remarkable composure, saving a set point with an ace before reeling off five consecutive points to clinch the set 8-6.

The Italian appeared poised for a straightforward finish when he secured a break to lead 4-2 in the second set. Yet Fonseca refused to back down, breaking Sinner to love in the ninth game before holding serve to level the contest at 5-5.

The second set also went to a tiebreak, producing another tense exchange. Fonseca briefly took the lead with an ace to move ahead 4-3, but Sinner again showed his experience, winning four straight points to close out the match with a superb forehand return.

"I felt that being aggressive was the key," Sinner said after the match. "Joao is an incredible talent and very powerful from both sides. I'm very happy to get through."

Sinner will next face 20-year-old American Learner Tien, who reached his first Masters 1000 quarter-final with a dramatic 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) victory over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

Elsewhere in the tournament, French youngster Arthur Fils continued his impressive comeback from injury by upsetting ninth-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-3, 7-6 (11/9). Fils will now meet Germany's Alexander Zverev, who defeated American Frances Tiafoe 6-3, 6-4 to progress.

For Sinner, the victory keeps alive his pursuit of a maiden title at the prestigious Masters 1000 event in the California desert, as the Italian continues his quest to add another major trophy to his growing collection.

# Tottenham keeper Kinsky substituted early after nightmare Champions League debut

**Young goalkeeper concedes three early goals before being replaced during first half**

**MADRID**

Young goalkeeper Antonin Kinsky endured a disastrous debut in the UEFA Champions League as he was substituted just 17 minutes into Tottenham Hotspur's round-of-16 clash against Atletico Madrid at the Metropolitano Stadium.

The 22-year-old Czech goalkeeper conceded three early goals after a series of costly errors, leaving Tottenham trailing 3-0 within the opening 15 minutes of the match. The Spanish side eventually sealed a commanding 5-2 victory in the first leg.

Kinsky's difficult evening began in the sixth minute when he slipped while attempting a clearance, sending the ball straight to an Atletico player. Moments later, Marcos Llorente capitalised on the mistake to give the hosts an early lead.

The situation worsened soon after when Antoine Griezmann doubled Atletico's advantage. Just minutes later, Kinsky attempted a quick pass out of his area but miskicked the ball, which rolled directly to Julian Alvarez, who calmly slotted it into an empty net.

With Tottenham already three goals down, Kinsky collapsed onto the pitch in frustration before manager Igor Tudor made the decision to substitute him in the 17th minute. First-choice goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario replaced the youngster as he walked off the field visibly emotional.

"It was necessary to do this, to preserve the player and the team," Tudor said after the match, describing the situation as "incredible."

Kinsky, who was signed from Slavia Prague last year, had made only two appearances this season prior to the high-profile clash, both in domestic cup competitions. His selection for one of Tottenham's most important matches of the season raised eyebrows, particularly given Vicario's availability.

Former Tottenham goalkeeper Paul Robinson described the incident as "confidence-destroying," saying he had rarely seen a goalkeeper substituted so early in a match.

Tottenham midfielder Archie Gray, however, backed his teammate to recover from the setback, noting that mistakes are part of the game and praising Kinsky's mental strength.

The defeat compounded a difficult season for Tottenham, who are struggling in the Premier League and are currently just above the relegation zone. The loss also marked the sixth consecutive defeat in all competitions for the London club.

For Tudor, who recently replaced Thomas Frank as manager, the result added further pressure as Tottenham's turbulent campaign continues to unravel.

# Yamal penalty rescues Barcelona in dramatic 1-1 draw at Newcastle

*Teenage star converts stoppage-time penalty to deny Newcastle famous Champions League victory*

**NEWCASTLE**

Teenage sensation Lamine Yamal struck with the final kick of the match to earn FC Barcelona a dramatic 1-1 draw against Newcastle United in the first leg of their UEFA Champions League round-of-16 clash at St James' Park.

Newcastle looked set for a famous European victory after Harvey Barnes gave the hosts the lead in the 86th minute. However, Barcelona were awarded a penalty deep into stoppage time when Dani Olmo was brought down inside the box by Malick Thiaw.

Yamal stepped up and calmly converted the spot-kick, sending goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale the wrong way to salvage a crucial away draw for the Spanish champions.

The result leaves the tie finely balanced ahead of the second leg in Barcelona on March 18, although the visitors will feel fortunate after a below-par performance from the side managed by Hansi Flick.

Newcastle's hopes of reaching the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time suffered a setback even before kickoff when key attacker Anthony Gordon was forced to start on the bench due to illness. The England international has been one of the tournament's most prolific players this season, with only Kylian Mbappe scoring more goals in the competition.

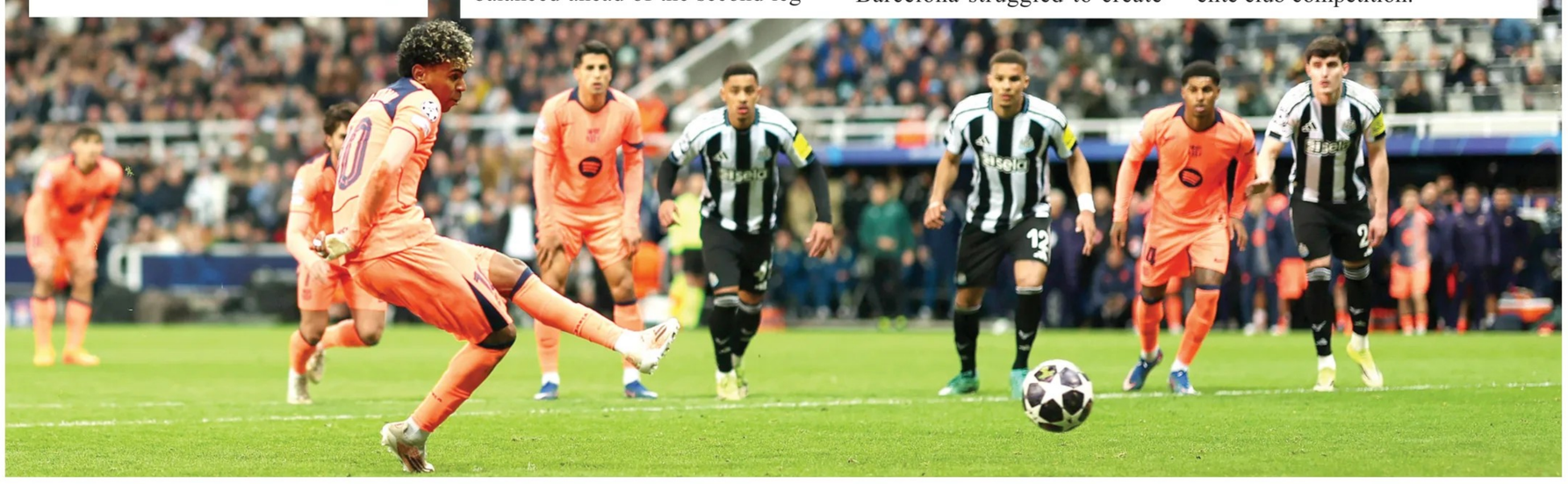
The hosts nevertheless began brightly and nearly took the lead before halftime when Sandro Tonali's header forced Barcelona goalkeeper Joan Garcia into a difficult save, with defender Pau Cubarsi clearing the rebound off the goal line.

Barcelona struggled to create clear chances for much of the match, with veteran striker Robert Lewandowski missing their best opportunity when he poked wide from a cross delivered by Raphinha.

Newcastle finally broke the deadlock late in the game when Jacob Murphy delivered a cross to the back post, where Barnes finished clinically to send the home crowd into celebration.

However, Newcastle's joy was short-lived. A late mistake from Thiaw allowed Olmo to draw a foul in the penalty area, handing Barcelona the opportunity to equalise.

Yamal's composed finish ensured Barcelona escaped with a valuable draw, leaving Newcastle needing a strong performance in the return leg if they are to progress to the last eight of Europe's elite club competition.



# Four Indians feature in ICC Team of 2026 T20 World Cup

**NEW DELHI**

Four Indian cricketers — Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah — were named in the Team of the Tournament for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 after India clinched a historic third title.

Leading the Indian quartet was wicketkeeper-opener Samson, who was also named Player of the Tournament following a sensational campaign with the bat. Samson amassed 321 runs in just five innings, playing several match-winning knocks for the eventual champions.

The 31-year-old initially began the tournament outside India's playing XI but quickly established himself as a key figure. He delivered Player of the Match performances against West Indies and England before producing a remarkable 89 in the final against New Zealand national cricket team. His knock was the highest individual score in a men's T20 World Cup final.

Kishan also enjoyed a stellar tournament, finishing with 317 runs — the fourth-highest tally among all players. The aggressive left-hander provided stability and momentum at the top of the order, maintaining a remarkable strike rate of 193.29.

One of Kishan's standout innings came against Pakistan national cricket team, when he smashed 77 as an opener. Later in the tournament he shifted to number three and continued to deliver important contributions, including a half-century in the final.

All-rounder Pandya was recognised for his impact with both bat and ball. He scored two half-centuries during the tournament, including a blistering 52 off 28 balls against Namibia national cricket team. With the ball, Pandya picked up nine wickets, often striking at crucial moments.

Fast bowler Bumrah, who was named Player of the Match in the final, completed the Indian representation in the team. He finished as the joint-leading wicket-taker of the tournament with 14 wickets in eight matches. His match-winning spell of four for 15 in the final played a decisive role in India's triumph, while he maintained an impressive economy rate of 6.21 throughout the competition.

Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan topped the tournament's run-scoring charts with 383 runs, while Aiden Markram was named captain of the team.

India's strong presence in the tournament's best XI underlined their dominance during the competition and reflected the depth of talent that powered their successful title campaign.

# Asian Weightlifting Championships postponed amid Middle East tensions

**KOLKATA**

The upcoming Asian Weightlifting Championships, scheduled to be held in Gandhinagar from April 1 to 10, has been postponed due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and Gulf region, officials confirmed.

The decision was taken after discussions among key stakeholders, with the Asian Weightlifting Federation (AWF) announcing a revised schedule for the continental event. According to an official statement from the federation, the championships will now take place from May 12 to 17.

The postponement comes amid growing concerns over regional instability and logistical challenges linked to the tensions in West Asia. Several participating nations had reportedly expressed apprehension about travel arrangements and athlete safety, prompting the governing body to reconsider the original dates.

India was set to host the prestigious continental tournament for the first time in recent years, with the event expected to attract top lifters from across Asia. The championships were also seen as an important preparatory competition for athletes aiming to secure qualification or improve rankings ahead of major international events.

For Indian lifters, the tournament carries additional significance. The Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWF) had earlier announced that performances at the Asian championships would play a crucial role in determining selection for the Asian Games.

This means that athletes such as Olympic silver medallist Mirabai Chanu and other leading Indian lifters will now have to adjust their competition schedules and training plans in accordance with the revised dates.

Officials, however, expressed confidence that the rescheduling would not significantly affect the overall preparations for the event. Organisers in Gandhinagar are expected to continue their logistical arrangements to ensure the smooth conduct of the championships in May.

The Asian Weightlifting Championships is one of the most important competitions on the continental calendar, bringing together elite lifters from powerhouse nations such as China, Iran, Kazakhstan and South Korea.

With the new schedule now confirmed, organisers and athletes alike will hope the event proceeds smoothly when it finally gets underway in May.

# Galatasaray stun Liverpool 1-0 in Champions League last-16 first-leg clash

**ISTANBUL**

Liverpool FC suffered a damaging 1-0 defeat to Galatasaray in the first leg of their UEFA Champions League round-of-16 tie, leaving the English club facing a difficult task in the return leg at Anfield.

A first-half header from Mario Lemina proved decisive at the intimidating RAMS Park in Istanbul, where Galatasaray capitalised on Liverpool's defensive lapses to gain a slender but significant advantage.

The Turkish side struck early in the seventh minute when a corner exposed Liverpool's ongoing struggles with set-piece defending. Victor Osimhen rose above the defence to flick the ball across goal, allowing Lemina to dive in with a close-range header that beat goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili.

Liverpool had an early opportunity to take the lead when Florian Wirtz intercepted a poor pass from Galatasaray goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir inside three minutes. However, the German midfielder dragged his shot narrowly wide from the edge of the penalty area.

The visitors struggled to find rhythm throughout the match, with Mohamed Salah enduring a quiet outing in what was his 81st Champions League appearance for Liverpool — a club record surpassing Jamie Carragher. Salah was eventually substituted just after the hour mark following an ineffective display.

Galatasaray continued to threaten on the counterattack and nearly doubled their advantage when Osimhen headed wide from close range after slipping free of his marker.

Liverpool goalkeeper Mamardashvili, deputising for injured Alisson Becker, made several key saves to keep the deficit at one goal. He denied a curling effort from Noa Lang and later produced a fine stop to block a powerful header from Davinson Sanchez.

The visitors thought they had equalised in the 70th minute when defender Ibrahima Konate turned in a corner from Dominik Szoboszlai, but VAR ruled the goal out for handball.

Further chances went begging as Alexis Mac Allister and Cody Gakpo both missed opportunities late in the match.

## QUICK READ

### India's data centre market may surge to $13 billion by 2034

**New Delhi**

India's data centre industry is expected to witness rapid expansion over the next decade, with the market projected to grow from $5.55 billion in 2025 to $13.11 billion by 2034, according to a report released on Wednesday. The workforce required to support the country's expanding digital infrastructure and highlights a growing gap between infrastructure investment and the availability of specialised talent, according to the report by Quess Corp. The sector is projected to expand by about 136 per cent over the period, supported by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10 per cent between 2026 and 2034, it said.

### India's mobile phone exports jump 127 times in last decade: Vaishnaw

**New Delhi**

India's mobile phone exports have surged sharply over the past decade, rising more than 127 times from about Rs 0.01 lakh crore in 2014-15 to nearly Rs 2 lakh crore in 2024-25, the Parliament was informed on Wednesday. Replying to a question in the Lok Sabha, Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the sharp growth in exports reflects the success of the government's push to expand electronics manufacturing under initiatives such as 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. The policies aim to build a complete ecosystem for electronics production in the country.

### Air India Express flight from Hyderabad faces nose-wheel problem

**New Delhi**

An aircraft operated by Air India Express faced a technical issue after landing at Phuket International Airport on Wednesday, leading to a temporary suspension of flight operations at the airport. The airline said that its Hyderabad–Phuket flight experienced a problem with the aircraft's nose wheel after landing in Thailand. The flight, IX 938, had taken off from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport and was headed to Phuket. In a statement, Air India Express confirmed that the aircraft encountered an issue with the nose wheel upon arrival at Phuket Airport on March 11.

# SHANTI Bill 2025 a major boost for India's nuclear power expansion

The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025, is seen as a major reform aimed at strengthening India's nuclear power ecosystem and improving project execution.

**NEW DELHI**

The SHANTI Bill 2025 is hailed as a structural reform for India's nuclear power sector, replacing outdated legislation with a unified framework. It aims to address long-standing barriers like liability issues to boost private investment and project execution.

The report projects a gradual expansion of nuclear capacity to approximately 22 Gigawatts by the financial year 2032. This growth is seen as critical for meeting base load power demand and supporting India's net-zero commitments alongside renewables.

By replacing two key existing laws—the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act of 2010—the new legislation proposes a unified legal framework governing the development, safety, security, safeguards, and liability aspects of nuclear energy.

One of the key provisions of the bill is that it allows government entities, companies, joint ventures, and other individuals or organisations specifically authorised by the central government to build, own, operate, or decommission nuclear power plants. It also permits such entities to fabricate nuclear fuel, including fuel conversion, thereby opening the sector to broader participation and technological collaboration.

**KEY POINTS**

- SHANTI Bill 2025 boosts India's nuke capacity & private investment
- It replaces Atomic Energy Act of 1962
- Unifies legal framework for nuclear sector
- Facilitates private sector participation
- Aims for ~22 GW capacity by FY2032
- Addresses liability and supplier risk

Infomerics Ratings noted that nuclear energy is likely to play a crucial role in India's future energy mix as the country seeks to meet its net-zero emissions commitments while addressing rising electricity demand. Although renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are expanding rapidly, their intermittent nature limits their ability to meet reliable base-load power requirements, even with advancements in energy storage. Nuclear power, therefore, remains an important complementary source of stable electricity generation.

Rohit Inamdar, Chief Ratings Officer at Infomerics Ratings, stated that the bill introduces category-wise caps on operator liability and restricts the ability to seek compensation from suppliers to specific contractual or intentional fault situations. This change, he said, would significantly reduce supplier risk, boost investor confidence, and encourage greater private sector involvement in upcoming nuclear projects.

Despite these reforms, the report cautioned that the expansion of nuclear capacity is expected to remain gradual. India's nuclear power capacity is projected to increase to around 22 gigawatts (GW) by the financial year 2032, based on projects currently under construction and those in the planning stage.

# Pak petrol price hike indicates deeper energy crisis

**ISLAMABAD**

**Petrol and diesel prices in Pakistan have surged by nearly Rs 55 per litre following the outbreak of the Iran war, highlighting the country's deep dependence on imported energy and the vulnerability of its economy to global oil shocks.**

The sharp increase in fuel prices comes as global crude oil markets react to the escalating conflict involving Iran, pushing up oil prices and increasing shipping costs due to heightened security risks and war-related insurance premiums.

With Pakistan heavily reliant on imported oil to meet its energy needs, authorities have been left with little option but to pass the higher costs directly to consumers.

According to the report, the recent Rs 55 per litre increase may not be the final adjustment. If the conflict continues and global oil prices remain elevated, Pakistan could face further increases in fuel prices in the coming months. Such hikes are expected to trigger a cascading economic impact, including higher transportation costs, rising food prices, accelerating inflation, and a significant increase in the cost of doing business across sectors.

The report argues that Pakistan's vulnerability to global energy shocks stems from a fundamental structural policy failure. Over the years, the country designed much of its energy system around imported fuels instead of prioritising domestic energy resources. In doing so, policymakers overlooked a critical principle of national energy strategy—ensuring long-term energy security through indigenous sources.

What makes the situation more concerning, the report noted, is that Pakistan is not lacking in energy resources. In fact, the country possesses considerable untapped potential across several energy sectors. The Thar coal reserves, for instance, rank among the largest lignite deposits in the world. These reserves have the capacity to generate up to 100,000 megawatts of electricity for more than a century if fully developed, offering a relatively cheaper and reliable alternative to imported fuels.

In addition to coal, Pakistan has substantial hydropower resources estimated at more than 60,000 megawatts, much of which remains unexploited. The country is also located in a region with high solar energy potential, while wind corridors in Sindh and Balochistan provide favourable conditions for renewable power generation.

## Over 7,700 food adulteration complaints received in 2024-25: Govt

**NEW DELHI**

More than 7,700 complaints related to food adulteration and safety were received in 2024–25, of which nearly 6,000 have been resolved, Parliament was informed on Wednesday. In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Consumer Affairs B. L. Verma said complaints are received through the online portal of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. Government data showed 4,330 complaints in 2022–23, with 4,074 resolved. In 2023–24, complaints rose to 4,735, of which 3,993 were addressed. The number increased further to 7,705 in 2024–25, with 5,952 resolved. Complaints are registered on the Food Safety Connect platform under the Food Safety Compliance System. Once filed, designated and food safety officers as well as food business operators can access them online. Enforcement is mainly handled by state food safety departments under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

## AP govt urges Shrimp farmers not to panic over Middle East conflict

**AMARAVATI**

Speaking during a video conference held on Wednesday, Atchannaidu reviewed the current situation with officials from the Andhra Pradesh State Aquaculture Development Authority (APSADA), including the co-vice chairman, members of the Non-Official Committee, and the Aquaculture Advisory Committee.

The meeting focused on concerns raised by farmers following media reports about the ongoing conflict in the Gulf region.

The minister said some farmers were worried that tensions in the Middle East could disrupt seafood exports, prompting them to consider premature harvesting of shrimp stocks. However, he clarified that such fears were largely unfounded.

According to Atchannaidu, only about 3–4 per cent of India's total seafood exports are shipped to the Middle East, mainly through the

Strait of Hormuz. He emphasised that shipments to other major markets remain unaffected.

He noted that seafood containers bound for major destinations such as the European Union, the United States, Japan, and China continue to move normally through multiple global shipping routes. These include the Red Sea–Suez Canal route, the Cape of Good Hope route, and the South China Sea shipping corridor. As a result, he said the present geopolitical situation is unlikely to cause any major disruption to India's seafood export supply chain.

The minister also expressed optimism about improving demand in the US market by the end of March 2026, particularly following the upcoming Seafood Expo North America 2026 scheduled to be held from March 15 to 17 in Boston. He explained that there is typically strong demand in the US market for shrimp of 50 and 60 count sizes, which are commonly produced by farmers in Andhra Pradesh.

He advised farmers not to harvest shrimp prematurely and instead wait until the optimal size is achieved to ensure better prices in international markets.

Atchannaidu also addressed concerns regarding tariffs, noting that the roughly 20 per cent tariff imposed by the United States on Indian shrimp—including Basic Duty, Anti-Dumping Duty (ADD), and Countervailing Duty (CVD)—is similar to the tariffs applied to competing seafood-exporting nations. This, he said, helps maintain India's competitiveness in the global seafood market.

## Over 7.72 cr active Kisan Credit Cards drive Rs 10.2L cr agri lending

**NEW DELHI**

The factsheet stated that the KCC platform has onboarded a total of 457 banks across the country, reflecting broad participation from various banking institutions in delivering agricultural credit.

Since the scheme's expansion and digitisation efforts, over 1,998.7 lakh credit applications have been processed through the system.

Among these, commercial banks processed 631.5 lakh applications, while regional rural banks handled around 337.2 lakh applications. Cooperative banks accounted for the largest share, processing approximately 1,030 lakh applications. The figures underscore the significant role played by cooperative banks in delivering credit to farmers, particularly at the grassroots level where access to formal banking services is often limited.

Officials said the Kisan Credit Card scheme continues to serve as a crucial financial support mechanism for farmers by providing timely and affordable credit for crop production and allied activities. The government has also undertaken several reforms in recent years to strengthen the scheme and enhance its outreach.

Key reforms include the enhancement of credit limits, the expansion of coverage to allied sectors such as fisheries and animal husbandry, and the integration of digital platforms like the Kisan Rin Portal. These initiatives have improved the transparency and efficiency of the credit delivery system while making it easier for farmers to access loans.

According to the factsheet, the adoption of digital monitoring tools and integrated portals has enabled better data-driven oversight, faster processing of loan applications, and more transparent claim settlements. This has significantly improved governance and operational efficiency within the agricultural credit framework.

In another major step to support farmers, the government increased the crop loan limit under the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. The credit limit for fisheries and other allied agricultural activities was also raised from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh, enabling farmers and rural entrepreneurs to access larger volumes of institutional credit.

GROWTH MOMENTUM

## *SAIL reports 'best ever' sales in FY'26*

**NEW DELHI**

State-run steel major Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has reported its highest-ever sales during the April–February period of FY26, the Ministry of Steel said on Wednesday.

The Maharatna PSU recorded total sales of 18.24 million tonnes (MT) during the first 11 months of the financial year, registering a 14 per cent year-on-year growth, the company said.

During the same period, the steel producer achieved its highest-ever cash collection of Rs 1.11 lakh crore, a 10 per cent increase compared to the previous year.

In terms of retail sales, the ministry highlighted that stockyard sales and door deliveries all witnessed significant improvement during the period, highlighting its customer-focused approach.

In February 2026 alone, SAIL recorded total sales of 1.58 MT, according to the

Ministry of Steel.

The company also reduced its inventory by 1.05 lakh tonnes compared to January 2026 and lowered its borrowings by Rs 1,000 crore, according to the ministry.

Responding to evolving market demand, SAIL has also reintroduced the production of chequered plates to cater to requirements from key sectors. The product is being manufactured for the first time at the Bokaro Steel Plant, located in Jharkhand.

Commenting on the performance, A.K. Panda, who holds additional charge as Director (Commercial), said the company remains focused on strengthening its financial discipline while responding to market needs.

We are ready to adapt and grow with the market. By managing inventory and working capital smartly, we are showing financial discipline that strengthens the company's foundation.

At the same time, our record sales and cash collections are proof of the trust our customers place in us, Panda said.

## West Asia crisis triggers LPG crunch for roadside eateries in Kolkata

**KOLKATA**

A shortage of commercial LPG cylinders, triggered by disruptions in global oil and gas supply amid tensions in West Asia, has begun to affect roadside eateries and small restaurants across Kolkata, forcing many to raise food prices while others fear closure.

Along with a rise in the price of domestic cooking gas, restrictions have reportedly been placed on the supply of commercial LPG, with priority being given to essential institutions such as schools and hospitals. As a result, several hotels and restaurants are struggling to procure commercial gas cylinders.

The worst hit are small roadside eateries and food joints across the city. Due to the unavailability of commercial LPG cylinders, some have already shut shop temporarily, while others have increased food prices to cope with rising costs.

With uncertainty over supply, many small establishments are now considering a return to traditional coal or charcoal stoves. However, rising food prices are also causing concern among customers.

From Kolkata's popular food hub Dacres Lane to well-known eateries in Park Circus, similar concerns are being reported. Anxiety is also evident among restaurant owners in busy commercial areas such as Park Street, Golpark, Chandni, Dalhousie, Esplanade, Camac Street, Exide Crossing and Minto Park.

Bubai Pandit, manager of the well-known Chitta Da's shop at Dacres Lane, said the situation could become critical if the shortage continues. If this continues, we may have to shut down the business. Gas prices are rising every day and the supply is decreasing. The more the conflict intensifies, the higher the prices seem to go. We are uncertain about the future, he said.

# WEST ASIA CRISIS CLOUDS IPL 2026 SEASON START PROSPECTS

## Rising Middle East tensions may delay IPL schedule as organisers review

**BENGALURU**

The start of the 2026 season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) could be delayed due to the ongoing geopolitical crisis in West Asia, with league officials closely monitoring the rapidly evolving situation before taking a final call.

The 19th edition of the cash-rich franchise T20 tournament was initially scheduled to begin on March 28. However, escalating tensions in the Middle East, which have disrupted international logistics and contributed to shortages of LPG supplies in India, may force organisers to postpone the start of the tournament by a few days, according to media reports.

Soon after India lifted the ICC Men's T20 World Cup title by defeating New Zealand national cricket team in a one-sided final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on March 8, the tournament's official broadcaster Star Sports had announced through social media that the IPL season would commence on March 28.

However, the deteriorating situation in West Asia has created uncertainty around several sporting schedules and logistical operations, prompting IPL authorities to reassess the tournament timeline.

IPL Chairperson Arun Dhumal acknowledged that the league's Governing Council is carefully observing developments before confirming the schedule.

"We're reviewing the development. Since this is an evolving situation, nothing can be said as of now. But given the requirement of the situation, we will take a call accordingly," Dhumal was quoted as saying in media reports.

The IPL Governing Council had been expected to release the fixtures for the 2026 season within the next few days. Earlier plans suggested that the first phase of the schedule would be announced initially, with the second phase to follow after the Election Commission of India finalised the dates for Assembly elections in five states.

However, the uncertainty triggered by the West Asia crisis has temporarily put those plans on hold.

Meanwhile, Royal Challengers Bengaluru will enter the season as defending champions after clinching their maiden IPL title last year.

They defeated Punjab Kings by six runs in the final played at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

Historically, Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings remain the most successful franchises in IPL history, jointly holding the record for the highest number of titles with five championships each.

Officials said a final decision regarding the tournament's start date will be taken once the situation in West Asia becomes clearer in the coming days.

# T20 WC final: Arshdeep fined 15% match fee

**Indian pacer penalised after aggressive throw struck New Zealand batter during Ahmedabad final**

**AHMEDABAD**

India pacer Arshdeep Singh has been fined 15 per cent of his match fee for throwing the ball "aggressively and inappropriately" at Daryl Mitchell during the final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026.

The incident occurred during the summit clash between India national cricket team and New Zealand national cricket team at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday, where India eventually secured a dominant victory to retain the world title.

According to the International Cricket Council (ICC), the 27-year-old left-arm fast bowler breached Article 2.9 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel. The article relates to throwing a ball or any piece of cricket equipment at or near a player in an inappropriate or potentially dangerous manner during an international match.

The incident took place in the 11th over of New Zealand's innings. After delivering the ball, Arshdeep fielded it on his follow-through and threw it forcefully in the direction of Mitchell, striking the batter on the pads. While the situation did not escalate further, match officials deemed the action to be inappropriate.

In addition to the fine, one demerit point has been added to Arshdeep's disciplinary record. The ICC clarified that this was the first offence for the Indian pacer within a 24-month period.

The sanction was proposed by match referee Andy Pycroft of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees. Arshdeep accepted the punishment without contest, which meant a formal disciplinary hearing was not required.

The charge was levelled by the on-field umpiring team comprising Richard Illingworth and Alex Wharf, along with third umpire Allahuddien Paleker and fourth umpire Adrian Holdstock.

Level 1 breaches under the ICC Code of Conduct carry penalties ranging from an official reprimand to a maximum fine of 50 per cent of a player's match fee, along with one or two demerit points.

Despite the brief controversy, the final ended in emphatic fashion for India, who defeated New Zealand by 96 runs. The victory helped India become the first team to successfully defend the T20 World Cup title and also made them the most successful side in the tournament's history with three championships.

**DUBAI**

Indian opener Smriti Mandhana has retained the No.1 position in the latest women's ODI batting rankings released by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

The elegant left-hander continues to top the list despite India's recent 0–3 series defeat to the Australia women's national cricket team. Mandhana's consistent run-scoring over the past year has helped her maintain the top spot among ODI batters.

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur also retained her place in the top 10, remaining eighth in the rankings. However, there was a slight setback for India as middle-order batter Jemimah Rodrigues slipped one place to 12th following the series against Australia.

Meanwhile, players from the New Zealand women's national cricket team made notable progress after strong performances in their ongoing home ODI series against the Zimbabwe women's national cricket team.

New Zealand captain Amelia Kerr was among the biggest gainers. The all-rounder impressed with the ball, taking four wickets in the first ODI and a stunning seven-wicket haul in the second match in Dunedin. Her performance made her only the seventh player in women's ODI history to take seven or more wickets in a match.

Kerr moved up five places to 11th in the ODI bowling rankings and also climbed to fifth among all-rounders.

Batters Brooke Halliday and Maddy Green also made gains after strong performances. Halliday scored an unbeaten 157 in the first ODI to reach 11th among batters, while Green moved up to joint 22nd.

Changes were also seen in the women's T20I rankings after the series between the West Indies women's national cricket team and the Sri Lanka women's national cricket team. Sri Lanka's Hasini Perera climbed to 28th in the T20I batting rankings after an unbeaten half-century, while West Indies spinner Afy Fletcher rose to seventh among bowlers.

# Iranian football team member changes mind on asylum request in Australia

**SYDNEY**

A member of the Iran women's national football team has withdrawn her request for asylum in Australia, leading to the relocation of teammates who had sought protection after their location was revealed to Iranian authorities.

The development comes amid heightened tensions surrounding the team's participation in the AFC Women's Asian Cup, where several players had sought sanctuary after facing backlash at home for refusing to sing the national anthem during matches.

Seven members of the visiting Iranian delegation had initially sought asylum in Australia, fearing repercussions upon returning to Iran. Their silent protest during the anthem was widely viewed as a symbolic act of defiance against the country's ruling establishment, drawing sharp criticism from officials and state media.

However, the situation took a dramatic turn when one of the players reconsidered her decision after speaking with teammates who had opted to return home. She subsequently contacted the Iranian embassy in Canberra, revealing the location of the other asylum seekers. Following the disclosure, Australian authorities swiftly moved the group to another safe location.



Tony Burke, Australia's Minister for Home Affairs, confirmed that officials acted immediately after learning that the embassy had obtained the team's whereabouts.

"As a result, the Iranian embassy now knew the location of where everybody was. I immediately gave instructions for the people to be moved, and that has been dealt with," Burke said, adding that the player who withdrew her asylum request had made the decision voluntarily.

Australian authorities had earlier taken precautions to ensure that players were able to make independent decisions regarding asylum. Each member of the team was separated from the main squad upon arrival at Sydney Airport and given the opportunity to privately consider whether to seek protection.

The episode has further strained relations between Australia and Iran. While Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese praised the courage of the players who sought asylum and pledged support for them, Iran's football authorities accused Australia of coercing the athletes into abandoning their homeland.

*Former Pakistan captain focuses on correcting technical flaws ahead of upcoming PSL*

# Babar Azam skips National T20 to work on batting technique before PSL

**KARACHI**

Former Pakistan national cricket team captain Babar Azam has opted out of the ongoing National T20 Championship in order to focus on improving his batting technique ahead of the start of the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

Babar's name had initially been included in the Lahore Whites squad for the domestic tournament currently being played in Peshawar. However, the star batter has decided not to participate in the competition and instead spend time working on his game with a group of coaches.

Sources close to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) indicated that the decision was taken in consultation with team management to allow the former captain to address certain technical shortcomings that have affected his batting in recent months.

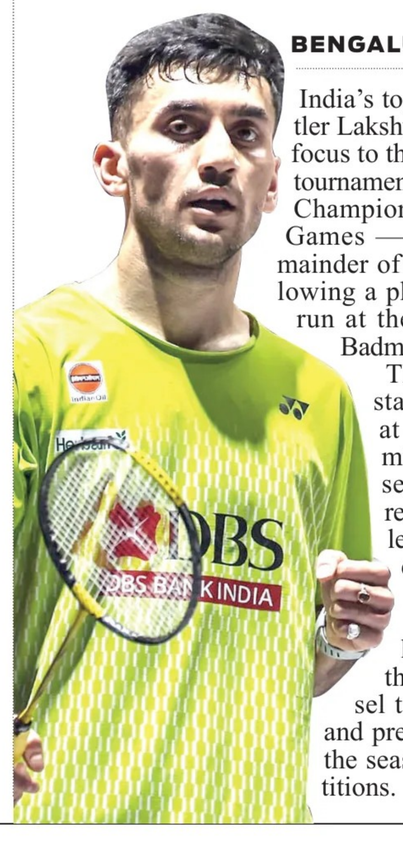
Although the identities of the coaches assisting him have not been disclosed, Babar is understood to be undergoing focused training sessions aimed at refining his technique before the next major assignment in the franchise league.

The PSL's 11th edition is scheduled to begin on March 26, where Babar will represent Peshawar Zalmi and is expected to open the batting for the side.

Once regarded as one of the most consistent batters in international cricket, Babar had previously topped the rankings across all formats released by the International Cricket Council. However, he has struggled to replicate his earlier form since 2024, facing criticism from former players and analysts over his recent performances.

His difficult phase continued during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, where Pakistan endured a disappointing campaign.

# Lakshya Sen targets World Ch'ships, Asian Games after demanding All England campaign




**BENGALURU**

India's top men's singles shuttler Lakshya Sen has shifted his focus to the upcoming marquee tournaments — the BWF World Championships and the Asian Games — as he plans the remainder of his 2026 season following a physically demanding run at the All England Open Badminton Championships.

The 24-year-old Indian star finished runner-up at the prestigious Birmingham event for the second time in his career, capping off a challenging week that tested his endurance and fitness. Following the tournament, Lakshya has decided to skip the Swiss Open in Basel to prioritise recovery and prepare strategically for the season's biggest competitions.

Speaking during a media interaction, Lakshya made it clear that the World Championships in August and the Asian Games in September will be his primary targets this year. "Yes, I think those two are the major events that I will be playing this year: World Championships and Asian Games," Lakshya said, adding that he plans to carefully assess his performance and training schedule before resuming competition.

The world No. 12 endured a tough path to the final in Birmingham. He began his campaign with an impressive victory over top seed Shi Yuqi in the opening round before overcoming Angus Ng Ka Long of Hong Kong and former champion Li Shifeng in subsequent rounds.

Lakshya then battled through a gruelling semifinal against Canada's Victor Lai, a marathon encounter that lasted 97 minutes and pushed the Indian shuttler to his physical limits.

He admitted the intense semifinal took a heavy toll on his body and affected his recovery ahead of the final. "The last semifinal that I played took some toll on the body, especially when I was cramping during the match. I did everything I could to recover well and come back fresh on the finals day," Lakshya explained.

However, the accumulated fatigue from several long matches during the week made it difficult to regain full fitness in time for the title clash. "Even during the match and after it, the muscles were under a lot of strain. From the first day itself, the matches were long and intense, so eventually the muscles got tired," he added.

Despite the physical strain, Lakshya believes the experience will help him fine-tune his preparation for the upcoming major events, where he hopes to deliver strong performances and bring more success for Indian badminton on the global stage.

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